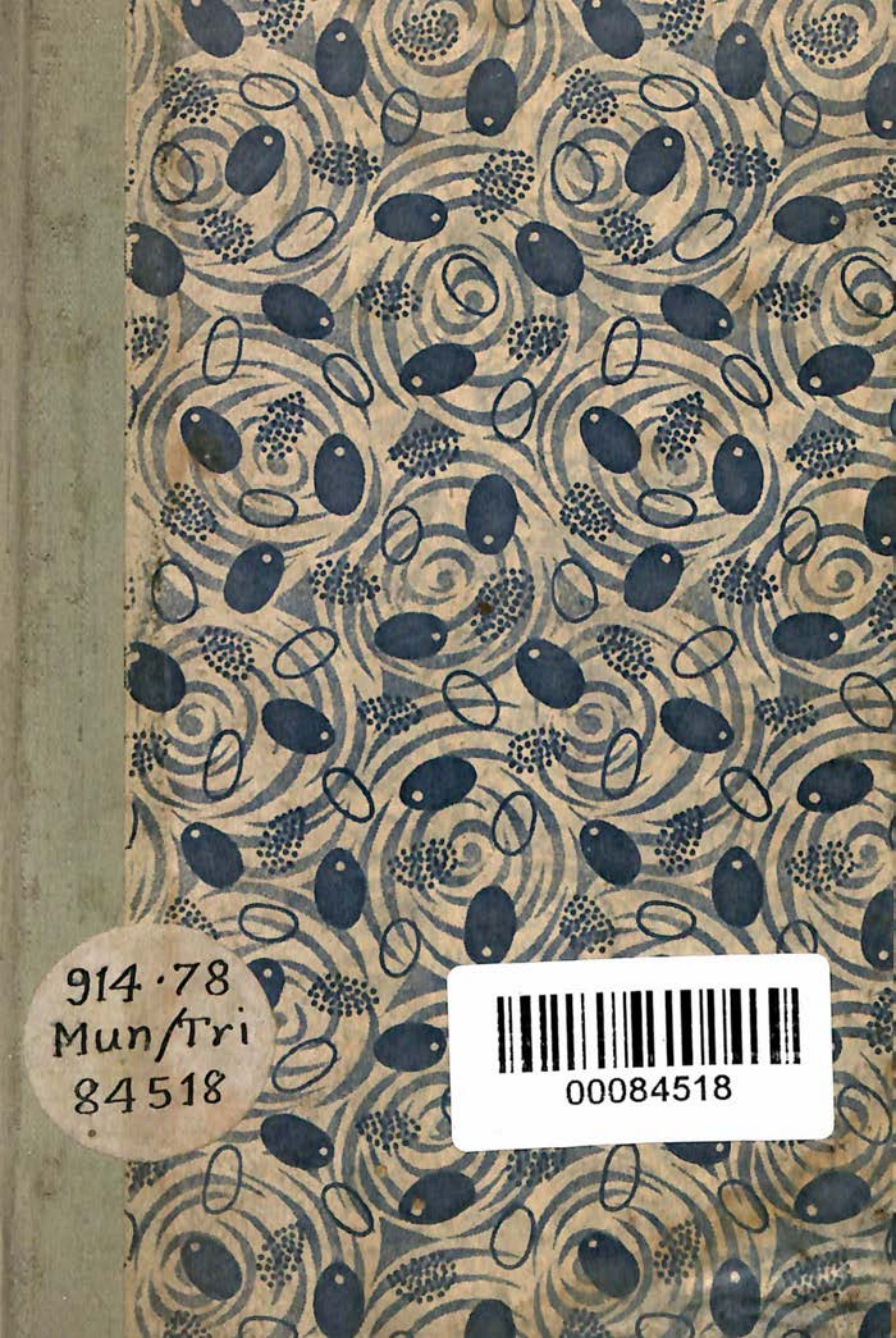

914·78
Mun/Tri
84518

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY-400 023.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018

A

TRIP UP THE VOLGA

TO THE

FAIR OF NIJNI-NOVGOROD.

BY

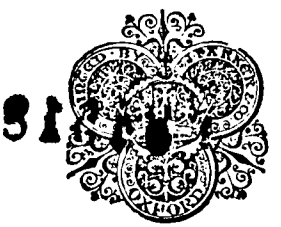
H. A. MUNRO-BUTLER-JOHNSTONE, M.P.

84518

With a Map and Twelve Illustrations.

SECOND EDITION.

Oxford and London:
JAMES PARKER AND CO.
1876.



00084518

TO

COLONEL CARGER,

AND THE OTHER RUSSIAN OFFICIALS

FROM WHOM I RECEIVED SO MUCH KIND ATTENTION

DURING MY TRIP IN RUSSIA,

I DEDICATE

THIS LITTLE BOOK.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE greater part of this little book appeared in the form of Letters addressed to the "Daily News" in the months of August, September, and October, 1874. Russia presents subjects of the most varied interest to the student of historical, ethnological, commercial, and political facts. The author does not flatter himself that he has made any serious contribution to the elucidation of any of these subjects; his aim will have been amply fulfilled, if he has succeeded in awaking in any of his readers a desire to visit the scenes described in this book, or to pursue still further the large subject of Russian commerce. A visitor to the banks of the Volga cannot fail, at any rate, to bring home the most agreeable recollections of a country teeming with interest of every kind, and of friendships formed among the pleasantest and most engaging people in the world.

8, Seamore Place, Mayfair,
July, 1875.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

Russia as it is 1

CHAPTER II.

Astrakhan, Okak, Serai; Mongols and Tartars 10

CHAPTER III.

Kirghes and Kalmucks 19

CHAPTER IV.

Saratof; the Colonists, Little Russians . . 29

CHAPTER V.

Samara; the Koumis Cure 41

CHAPTER VI.

Kasan; Tartars, Tschouvashes, Tcheremes, Mordvins, Votiaks 54

CHAPTER VII.

Nijni-Novgorod. First aspect of the Fair . 67

CHAPTER VIII.

Nijni-Novgorod. Tea, Sugar, and Iron . . 82

CHAPTER IX.

Nijni-Novgorod. Cotton, Linen, Silks, and Woollen Goods 96

CHAPTER X.

PAGE

NIJNI-NOVGOROD. PERSIAN AND CAUCASIAN GOODS, WOOD AND FURS 109

CHAPTER XI.

NIJNI-NOVGOROD. THE AMUSEMENTS OF THE FAIR . 119

CHAPTER XII.

NIJNI-NOVGOROD. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FAIR. CHIPOFF 130

CHAPTER XIII.

NIJNI-NOVGOROD. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE FAIR 137

A TRIP UP THE VOLGA, &c.

CHAPTER I.

RUSSIA AS IT IS.

THE traveller in the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea who wishes to proceed to the great fair of Nijni-Novgorod will find that his route to the great Yarmark lies through the most interesting portion of the Russian Empire. Provided he allows himself sufficient time to visit the different settlements on the banks of the Volga, a trip up that river from Astrakhan will afford him more varied entertainment than would probably any journey of equal duration in the world. On the banks of the Volga he can find, as it were, samples of the different varieties of the human species—Fins (Ugrians), Tartars, Kalmucks, not to speak of Teutons and Sclaves—collected into batches as if for the special convenience of the ethnological student. Russia is in this respect the most picturesque of countries—picturesque not certainly in its natural scenery, which consists for the most part of monotonous and endless plains, but in the races which people them. There are no less than thirty-six different races included in the Russian dominions. Some of these, and the most interesting, are to be seen, not in a state of fusion with others, but each living a life of its own, intermarrying only

among its own, preserving its own peculiar institutions, manners, customs, language, and religion, apparently absolutely unaffected by the civilization of the country in the midst of which it has pitched its camp. It is a common complaint that civilization is improving varieties off the face of the earth,—that one variety after another is dying out, one province after another losing its peculiar characteristics, and fashioning itself after some common type of the national character. Everywhere in Europe, except perhaps in Spain, is this levelling process at work. It is essentially so in France; it is rapidly becoming the case in Germany; it is more or less so even in Italy; and England has for a long time past been exhibiting the same phenomenon. But in Russia, and for an obvious cause, it is less the case than anywhere in Europe. The obvious cause is that Russia is not a nation, but a continent, and, measuring civilization by the progress of the steam-engine, only a half-civilized continent. But whatever Russia may lose in this way she undoubtedly gains in picturesqueness. With her the assimilation of her numerous races proceeds by far slower and more measured steps than elsewhere, if indeed it can be said to proceed at all. The German colonist of a century ago is still the German colonist, with his Teuton ways uncontaminated by Sclavonic manners, and his German tongue innocent of the Russian language. The wild Nomad Kirghis, if somewhat less wild, is still the Nomad Kirghis; his occupation is still that of a herdsman, his home the saddle and the tent. The

Tartar, together with his peculiar dress, preserves his ancient religion and the manners and customs of his ancestors. The tradition of having once been the conquering race, and of having belonged to one of the great Khanates founded by the successors of the conquering Timur, is not yet dead amongst them. And, wildest and most picturesque of all, the stout and hideous Kalmuck presents on the Steppes of Russia an exact reflection of the manners and customs of his brethren in Dzungaria. Nor is it among the so-called Tartar races alone that these conservative tendencies are to be found. The Mordvins, the Tcheremes, and the Tschouvashes exhibit to us the faithful representation of uncontaminated primitive Ugrian (Fin) life. All these different races can be passed as it were in review in the course of a trip up the Volga to Nijni-Novgorod.

I have said that Russia is not a country, but a continent. Her giant tracts bear no resemblance to anything you find in Europe. In the north there is a single tract of forest covering a superficies as large as the whole of Spain; then another large tract inhabited by a population engaged in every variety of industry, and dependent for fuel on these northern forests; then another huge tract, twice the size of France, of deep black soil (Tcherne Zeme), which has for more than a century past yielded the richest crops of wheat, and has never seen manure; then, to the south and south-east, another huge tract of steppes, only waiting for an increase of population to become perhaps one of the most fertile in the

world; then, away across the Urals, another limitless tract, rather another continent than a country, the Asiatic reserve of the European giant. The population inhabiting these different tracts amounts at present to sixty millions; by the end of the century it is calculated that it will reach a hundred millions; and the resources of the country are considered capable of sustaining, without a strain, a hundred and seventy millions of inhabitants. Of the sixty millions present inhabitants, thirty-five millions of homogeneous Sclaves form the backbone of the nation, a larger mass of homogeneous people than is to be found anywhere else.

The unity and integrity of a country so composed can never be seriously threatened. Besides, with the exception of the Poles, even the most wild and heterogeneous tribes to be found within its borders yield a ready and unquestioning obedience to a Government which, by long experience, knows how to deal with its numerous races, applying a Lesbian rule to the requirements and capacities of each, but at the same time extracting military service and tribute from them all.

Such and so great is the Russia of the present day, with her boundless resources, with all the appliances and secrets of modern civilization and science at her command, with the most autocratic and, for national purposes, centralized Government in the world, and with—universal conscription. She is, indeed, not a nation, but a continent, and an armed and drilled continent into the bargain. It is im-

possible to contemplate this giant power without musing on the possibilities of the future, perhaps, too, no very distant future. One thing is quite clear; the Russia of 1874 is no more the Russia of the Crimean war than it is the Russia of Boris Godounoff. No event in history ever marked an era in a nation's life more distinctly than did the Crimean war in that of Russia. That war may be said to have produced two distinct ultimate effects; it ruined Turkey, and it regenerated Russia. It ruined Turkey by confounding her finances and teaching her the fatal secret of a national debt, which the Turk has since worked out to the inevitable conclusion of national bankruptcy. It regenerated Russia by shewing her the weak parts in her cuirass, the corruption of her Administration, the absence of means of internal communication, and the want of vigour and intelligence in a portion of her population. She, too, has improved the lesson: every branch of her Administration has been reformed; corruption, if not absolutely rooted out, has at any rate been checked, and compelled to hide its head; a network of railways has been undertaken, the most important lines of which are now completed, connecting the heart of the empire with its most distant members; and, greatest triumph of all, the emancipation of the serf was resolved upon, and, in spite of all obstacles, has been successfully carried out, a measure which, by stimulating the free energies, cannot fail to develope the intelligence of the great mass of the rural population of the country. In fact, there has been pro-

gress—great, rapid, and astounding progress,—material, social, and moral progress,—along the whole line.

Nor must we omit political progress. Russia's action in the matter of Poland has not generally been fully comprehended. It is known that the viceroyalty has been abolished, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw converted into the "Province of the Vistula," with all that such a change connotes; that a severely repressive system has been introduced in the administration of these provinces; and that a law equivalent to confiscation has been applied to the large landed proprietors. But all this has been the least important part of Russia's action in the matter: the real key of the Polish question was not Poland, but Lithuania. The Lithuanian provinces had been united to the ancient kingdom of Poland since the end of the fourteenth century, by the marriage of Jagellon, Prince of Lithuania, with Hedwig, the reigning Queen of Poland. Since that time the destinies of the two people had been joined together for better and for worse, until forcibly dissevered by Russia. Public opinion in Russia—and this is not generally known abroad, and was singularly ignored in Earl Russell's despatches on the subject—would have been quite willing to make any sacrifice, even to the granting of autonomy, with reference to Poland proper, i.e. the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. The chief organ of public opinion in Moscow was allowed openly to advocate this solution of the Polish difficulty; it was the Poles themselves who rejected it: they had no desire for a

sham and delusive independence, and they knew well that the independence of a microscopic kingdom such as it was proposed to establish, surrounded on all sides by the great Military Powers, and with no outlet towards the sea, would have been a mockery indeed, and its liberty of action a delusion. They, therefore, unhesitatingly rejected the proffered gift, and insisted on their ancient provinces of Lithuania sharing their fortunes, and, if it could be achieved, their independence. From that moment all thoughts of effecting a peaceful solution of the Polish question died out in Russia. This claim of the Polish people to what the Russians called *their* Western Provinces, was the tocsin which roused the patriotism of the nation, and the unequal struggle commenced. It was essentially and distinctly a struggle not for Poland, but for Lithuania, where the proprietors and ruling class were Poles, but the peasantry belonged to a different though kindred branch of the great Sclave or Sarmatian family, more nearly allied to the Lett population of Livonia and Courland than either to the Russian or the Pole. If left to himself, the Lithuanian peasant would probably have been indifferent as to the result of the struggle; but he was easily carried away—as the mean white was by the Southern planter—by the influence and example of his Polish proprietor. Western Europe, after a moment's hesitation, declined to interfere, and there could therefore be but one issue to the contest: the rebellion was, after a short and heroic struggle, effectually stamped out: from that moment the chief

action of Russia has been directed not to Poland, but to Lithuania. In Poland, in spite of all her efforts, she is not sanguine of effecting any lasting result: there peasant and proprietor are banded together in a common religion of undying hatred to her rule; she may confiscate his property from the landlord, and divide it among his tenants; and the result is she will have twenty proprietors, instead of one, anxious to throw off her yoke. But Lithuania offers her a fairer field; let her only root out the proprietor, drive out the Polish element, and all may be well. It must be allowed that her system here has been thorough, and is meeting the reward of thoroughness. She has spared neither cost nor pains to get rid of the old Polish proprietors, and to substitute patriotic Russians in their place; she has forbidden the use of the Polish language in the schools, and she has good hope that the last trace of the old rebel Polish element will soon be eradicated in these provinces, and the country thoroughly Russianized. I wish now to point attention to the fact that when this is done, the Polish difficulty will assume very different proportions for Russia from what it has hitherto done. It may not be wholly got rid of, but it will at any rate be reduced to manageable proportions: Russia's defensive, and consequently offensive, position in Europe will in consequence be immeasurably strengthened. The Polish question was an arm in the hands of any enemy who chose to use it against her. Austria, who after Turkey, or perhaps before Turkey, has most to fear from Russia,

possessed in Galicia a powder magazine, to which she had only to apply a match in order to blow up her neighbour's house; that neighbour's house is now insured. Poland was the key of the position in Eastern Europe: Russia has now put that key into her pocket. Is it not clear that such a change alters the whole face of politics in Europe? This change, too, has been effected since the Crimean war. Add to this that there has been in the result of the Franco-German war a shuffle of the cards too obviously to the advantage of Russia, and, to crown all, and, as it were, to give a definite direction and purpose to all these changes, that a stringent military law of universal conscription has been decreed, and is now enforced throughout the Empire; and I would ask whether it is any exaggeration of the fact to say that Russia is now ten times stronger than she was during the Crimean war, when she was still able for two years to make head against a coalition; and I would further ask whether it is wise, prudent, or even rational for those who may have to meet this giant Power, perhaps at no very distant date, in the neighbourhood of the Balkans, the Carpathians, or the Himalayas, to remain in a state of comparative unpreparedness, rocking themselves in a fool's paradise, with the soothing assurance that there is no danger?

Having delivered myself of these preliminary remarks, I will proceed with my journey to Nijni-Novgorod, and my visit to the various communities settled on the banks of the Volga.

CHAPTER II.

ASTRAKHAN, OKAK, SERAI; KALMUCKS AND TARTARS.

ASTRAKHAN, situated on a number of little hills on an oasis formed by an arm of the Volga, about twenty-five miles from its mouth, with the minarets of a dozen mosques interspersed among the cupolas of its innumerable churches, with its spacious fruit-gardens, its celebrated vines, and still more famous water-melons, presents, on first striking a stranger's eye, a most fascinating appearance. This illusion, like that engendered by the first sight of so many Russian and Oriental towns, vanishes on nearer inspection. Its dirty and irregular streets, badly paved or not paved at all, its wide, dusty, and interminable suburbs lined with mean-looking, unsubstantial wooden houses, and "an ancient and a fish-like smell" pervading the whole atmosphere, all leave the impression, which is not altogether unjustified by the fact, that Astrakhan is a huge and gilded fish-market. Nevertheless, it is an important place; its fishing-trade alone gives employment to thousands of people, and is worth millions of roubles: it is the great depôt for the manufacture of caviare. There is also an Admiralty House, built by Peter the Great, for it is the headquarters of the Caspian fleet, founded by that enterprising monarch for the protection of

ASTRAKHAN.

the fisheries, but still more for the furtherance of his ambitious views on the side of Persia, the Caucasus, and Independent Tartary. He pointed himself the road to Russian conquest in these parts by the acquisition of Derbent, and his successors have so far followed in his footsteps that the whole of the Caucasus is now Russian, a Russian force occupies the mouth of the Attrek, and to-day the Russian flag floats over Khiva.

But it is not with Astrakhan, its Admiralty, its fleet, or its water-melons that a stranger will probably be chiefly concerned. If he has a weakness for antiquities, or loves to unravel the pedigree of a great nation, he will here be treading on sacred ground. For eighty-five versts (say sixty miles) along the Aktuba branch of the Volga, the whole district is covered with ruins, with the ruins of ancient cities, the capitals of empires mighty in their day, which have passed away and scarcely left a trace behind them, the very sites of which have to be sought by the curious on the desert steppes of roving Kirghes.

Here stood Okak, the capital of the ancient Khazar Empire, the very name of which now sounds strange and unfamiliar to our ears, although it was once (in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries of our era) the great name in the East. It succeeds in history the name of the Huns and Avars, themselves the successors of the Scythians or Skoloti of Herodotus, and it is succeeded by that of the Petshinegs, the Uzi, and the Cumani of mediæval history. The flourishing time of the Khazar Empire was the eighth century.

Irene, mother of the Emperor Leo IV., was the daughter of the Khan of the Khazars. Scythians, Alani, Huns, Avars, Khazars, Petshinegs, Uzi, and Cumani, all probably allied tribes of the same great Turk or Scythian stock, recruited probably from time to time by their kinsmen from the East, formed one mighty confederation which inhabited and ruled over the rich country between the Don, Volga, and the Caucasian range, each probably giving its specific or tribal name to the whole country, according as it rose in its turn to pre-eminence, and assumed, so to speak, the hegemony of the confederation. This lasted till the ninth or tenth century of our era. Then set in the great tide of Sclavonic invasion from the West, and the Eastern tide was rolled back for a time. From Kief, on the Dnieper, and Novgorod on the Ilmen, the Sclavonic wave swept over the whole area of European Russia. Okak, then, is the representative ruin of the pre-Sclavonic epoch in Russia. There was in all probability an Ugrian (Fin) occupation of these countries anterior to this; but this is inferential—there are no Ugrian ruins in these parts; we must wait for such till we get to Kasan. Close to the ruins of Okak are those of another great city, Serai, the capital of the Mongol Empire of the West, the seat of the Khan of the Golden Horde, the headquarters of the great "Kiptshak."

The "Kiptshak" is the name of the Mongol Empire of the West, founded by Zenghis Khan and his successors in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Originally the khan of a small and single tribe speci-

fically called "Mongol," on the west of the Chinese Wall, Zenghis became the chief of a mighty confederation, and one of the greatest conquerors the world ever saw. His son, Tushi, invaded Russia, and a great battle on the banks of the Khalka, 1223 A.D., decided the fate of that country. United, it could not have withstood the Mongol onset; divided as it was among a number of petty princes of the house of Ruric, many of whom betrayed the national cause, each jealous of the other, she fell an easy prey to the Mongol hosts, and was forced for nearly two centuries to endure the Mongol domination. Batou, the grandson of Zenghis, completed the conquest which Tushi had begun; he overran the cities of Astrakhan and Kasan, reduced the towns of Kief and Moscow to ashes, and subdued the whole country from Livonia to the Black Sea. The great Mongol Empire of the "Kiptshak," of which Serai was the capital, was now founded, and it lasted from A.D. 1223 to the end of the fourteenth century. Another change now took place. The Temuginian Empire gave way to the Timurian, the Mongol to the Tartar or Turk. Timur, or Tamerlane, who was a Turk and not a Mongol, had risen to power in the parts beyond the Oxus. The counter shock of this revolution was felt in Russia, in the Kiptshak. Civil war, and such help as Timur afforded, broke the family of Batou, and the Kiptshak, and with it Serai, disappear from history, to be succeeded by a number of different Turkish khanates, the central branch falling into the three khanates of Kasan, Astrakhan and the Crimea.

I hope these dry historical details will not be considered superfluous. Without them it is impossible to distinguish correctly between two names which are too often confounded together, i.e. Turk and Kalmuck or Mongol, the confusion between the two being sadly increased by the common application of the word Tartar to both. Both races belong to the same great Turanian family of mankind, they have many physical characteristics in common, the one may be even said in this respect to graduate into the other; both have equally been scourges of the world, both have been in a great measure mixed up in the armies both of Zenghis and of Tamerlane, the conquering Mongol drawing along in his train the neighbouring Turk tribes who felt his strong hand; and the victorious Turk, in his turn, easily enticing the wild and predatory Kalmuck with the same bait, that of the plunder of a world. The same confusion of names has taken place in India: there we talk of the Great Mogul, which, name for name, means the Great Mongol: and yet he was not a Mongol at all, but a Turk. It is absolutely necessary to distinguish between the two: though belonging to the same Turanian family, they belong to different divisions of it; the Mongol physiognomy is only that of the ruder Turks; the Osmanli, if taken as the type of the Turk, is entirely different; their histories have been different; the Mongol sword has cut towards China, the Turkish sword towards Europe. Much has followed from this difference. It is from China (Thibet) whence the Mongol has derived his civilization and his re-

ligiòn; the Turk owes his to Arabia, he is a follower of the prophet.

The centre of interest now shifts from Astrakhan or rather Serai to Kasan, from the Kiptshak to the Turkish Khanates, of which that of Kasan was the principal. Before, however, proceeding hither on our road, to Nijni-Novgorod, let us pay a visit to specimens of these two races which we have been talking of, and between whom we have been endeavouring clearly to distinguish. It so happens that on each bank of the Volga, east and west of Astrakhan, we shall find located a Turkish and a Kalmuck tribe respectively; on the left bank a nomad tribe of Kirghes, and on the right a nomad tribe of Kalmucks. They have many characteristics in common, like all nomad tribes indeed; they have also many points of difference. They are representative types of the two races so famous for more than three centuries in Russian history, the founders of the Kiptshak and the founders of the Khanates. Between the rivers Ural and Volga, and the Governments of Astrakhan and Ouralsk, stretching north and south from the southern portion of the Government of Samara to the Caspian Sea, on the borders, therefore, of Asia and Europe, there is a large oblong tract of steppe land, inhabited by a race of men who in physiognomy resemble the Mongols (they are the most Mongol-looking of the Turk family);[1] in speech the Turk, and in habits and customs the wild nomad tribes of Independent Tartary. In manners, customs, speech, religion, and occupation, they are identical with their

brethren the Kirghes, who are found along the whole northern boundary of Turkestan, from the Caspian to the frontier of Khokend. They are not, like the Bashkirs and others, a half but a wholly nomad people, living on horseback, tending herds, carrying their tents, wives, and furniture on the backs of camels, and pitching their tents in wild steppes farthest away from the habitations of civilized men; they are identical in race with those wild tribes of horsemen who have roamed from time immemorial along the immense steppes between the Altai mountains and the river Ural (Yaik), engaged in the rearing of horses and of cattle, unless occupied in the more serious and congenial pursuits of plundering caravans, levying black mail, or following some great marauding captain, Tartar or Mongol, as the case might be, in order to plunder and devastate the world. Of these wild tribes there are three great divisions, known as the Great Horde, the Little Horde, and the Middle Horde. The roaming-ground of the Great Horde, which is, by the way, the smallest of the three, lies to the east on the frontiers of Khokend; the Little Horde are found between the Caspian and the Aral; and the Middle Horde, which is the most numerous, are between the two. Originally they were all independent, marshalled under their respective Khans, Sheiks, and Bahadurs (Begs). At the beginning of the last century, when the Dzungarian Mongols became subject to China, the movement of disturbance was felt all along the line of the Kirghes. The Little Horde and part of the Middle Horde called in the

protection of Russia. In order to repress the turbulent and marauding dispositions of these new and troublesome subjects, who plundered more than ever the caravans to Bokhara, and in order, with this view, to break up their organization, the Russian Government devised the ingenious plan of taking away the power from the khan, and dividing it among the elders or nobles. This policy was successful; the Little Horde was completely broken up; some joined the Middle Horde; some joined the Turcomans on the south; others went over to the Uzbek khanate of Khiva; whilst a large division of some ten thousand families made its way into the Government of Astrakhan, settling under a khan of their own in the tract of steppe country between the Ural and the Volga. Russia's action in the matter did not stop here. Unwilling to tolerate even this small *imperium in imperio*, she compelled the khan to exchange his position as khan of a nomad tribe for that of a Russian prince. He was given an allotment of one hundred thousand dessiatina (the dessiatina is about two and three-quarters English acres) of land, and some half-million of roubles, by way of compensation for the cession of all jurisdiction over his former quasi-subjects. He was, moreover, induced to send his son (who has since succeeded him) to the College of Cadets at St. Petersburg, whence he entered the Russian army, and now lives on his paternal estates at Savinka, as any other Russian nobleman and retired officer of the army. His residence at Savinka is to the north of the Kirghese

encampments, the nearest of which—they are divided into five tribes—is not more than fifteen versts (ten miles) from his house. The jurisdiction over the Kirghes which was formerly exercised by him has been transferred to a Russian Starosta, who lives at Khanskaia Stavka, about the centre of the encampments, and exercises administrative judicial and financial functions, very similar to those of a collector in our own Indian provinces. Formerly the Kirghes were sorely harassed and plundered in the name of the law and the exchequer by these Starostas; but, latterly, since the general reform of the Russian Administration, educated gentlemen have been appointed to this post, and the plundering has ceased. Whereas, however, formerly the Kirghes roamed pretty well at their discretion over the whole country between the Volga and the Yaik (Ural), the Government has now marked off the oblong tract which I have described as the limits of their territory. They pay taxes according to the size of their herds and flocks, and are now, like all the inhabitants of this vast Empire, subject to military service.

KIRGHES.

CHAPTER III.

KIRGHES AND KALMUCKS.

A KIRGHESE encampment is a picturesque sight. The orientally grave and sedate camel gives it too an air of reality. The tents are oval-shaped, like bee-hives, with a hole at the top, serving indifferently as a window or chimney. This is covered up if necessary, by a piece of felt, with which material the whole tent is covered. The framework of the tent is composed of birch twigs of the thickness of a little finger, and presents, when stripped of its felt covering, very much the appearance, on a large scale, of those cages or crinolines one sees dangling in the windows of a provincial shop. This wooden framework, as well as the felt covering, takes into four or five pieces, and is packed, together with the women and furniture, on the backs of the camels, the men following some hours afterwards on horseback, when the encampment strikes its tents and moves to other quarters: when necessary, this *déménagement* takes place in an incredibly short space of time; five minutes is as much as is required to pack up and be on the way. The Kirghes are Mohammedans for the most part, but rather lax religionists; those who are not Mohammedans are Pagans. I am told these exist, but I did not meet with any. The tent door consists of an opening at the side, at the top

of which a rush matting is rolled up and let down when necessary. One's first impression on entering a tent is an impression of grimy gaudiness, the exact opposite of the *simplex munditiis* of Horace: everything in it is of red and flaring colours; small carpets or mats of bright Persian pattern are thrown about the ground; on them are strewn cushions of various sizes covered with similarly-coloured cotton prints: a curtain of similar material and design divides off a segment of the tent—that apportioned to the women. Although his creed admits of a plurality of wives, the wise Kirghis does not venture on the experiment within the precincts of his tent. Fancy the consequences, if he did! From the roof, so to speak, of the tent—that is, from its upper concave sides—are occasionally suspended bright red and yellow ribbons, like the pennants of banners. The Kirghis by no means despises ornamentation, only he has his own ideas about ornamentation. A chest or wooden box, painted red, and relieved with yellow birds or griffins, completes the inventory of a tent; in this box are packed the more valuable goods, such as the women's ornaments, as well as their crockery and other implements of domesticity. A Kirghis tent always contains this *coffre fort*. No description, however, would convey a faithful picture of the interior of these tents which omitted to give to it its last touch of colouring. This consists of a strong coating of nomad dust and soot; which is by no means remarkable, considering that the fireplace is constructed by a few stones piled in the centre, from

which the smoke is allowed to wend its way as it listeth to the little aperture which I have described at the top of the tent. An inevitable consequence of this is that great numbers of the Kirghes suffer from sore eyes: the same thing and for the same reason obtains among the Tschouvashes. Another consequence is that every Kirghis looks smoked: it is not that they are simply dirty, the dirt is ineradicably ingrained.

The dress of the men is not very unlike that of the Russian peasant. A felt hat of a wideawake cut is the familiar headgear, whilst some few wear what is evidently their winter covering, a nightcap-shaped looking bonnet, the outer rim of which, about four inches wide, forms a flap which is lined with wool, and can be pulled down, if necessary, over the back of the neck and ears, thus affording great warmth. Enormously wide leather trousers (a contrast to the English jockey's) are tucked into short butcher boots; a loose coat (khalat) worn over the shirt, open at the neck and wide at the sleeves, with a belt round the waist, completes the costume. In the winter a short pelisse made of sheep's wool, and called poloo-shooba, is worn under the khalat, the wool inwards, which by being tucked into the trousers secures a capital protection for the loins against the wet and cold. They seem for the most part a strong and broad-shouldered race of men: a peculiarity which is observable is that they are all bow-legged, the children not excepted. I commend this fact relative to a race of horsemen to the attention of Mr. Darwin.

The dress of the women is that of the ordinary Tartar women: I shall have to describe this when I come to Kasan. The Kirghes are not behind other nomad tribes in their reputation for hospitality. Should you happen to visit an encampment whilst a meal is going on, the following ceremony will take place: you will be invited in by the elder of the tent; you will be placed in the seat of honour, farthest away from and opposite to the door, on a pile of cushions heaped on one another on one of the mats or small carpets: the elder will himself squat, Turkish fashion, sitting on his feet turned inwards, near, but still at a more or less deferential distance from you; the young men and the old women (the latter the only representatives of their sex) squatting in different parts of the tent. They do not sit formally in a circle. Out of a large iron cauldron which has been simmering on the fireplace, the elder drags, sometimes literally by the tail, a huge piece of boiled mutton, which he puts on a large platter: off it he cuts with a knife, which every Kirghis wears suspended in a leather scabbard from his belt, what he no doubt considers a tit-bit; this he will take between his thumb and fore and middle finger, and deliberately present it to your mouth: if properly trained beforehand, you will allow him to place it in your mouth, and you will take a similar piece between your own fingers and do the same with him: the rest of the company will then set-to with their knives and help themselves. The savoury odour, and the smoke issuing from the chimney, will allure other Kirghes to the tent: these will come up to

the door like lean and hungry dogs, and will probably be invited in; by their joint exertions the huge lump of mutton, let me rather call it boiled sheep, will quickly disappear: when this takes place, the broth in which the sheep has been boiled is poured into a large wooden bowl, and the elder will again perform his duties as master of the feast: holding the bowl daintily by the edge between his two palms, and twisting it slowly right and left with a kind of serpentine motion as he approaches you, he will present it to your lips: you will have to drink out of the proffered bowl with the best grace you can, as long as you can, and with signs of apparent relish; after which the inevitable koumis will appear; this will be poured out of the leather skin in which it is kept into the same bowl which served for the mutton broth, and the same ceremony will be repeated, preceded by the same dainty serpentine motion: when the koumis is disposed of, the equally inevitable tchai will follow. The feast ends as it was begun by a short and solemn prayer, after the invariable practice of all the faithful. I may mention, as a detail, that great value is attached to the wooden bowls from which the koumis and the soup are drunk: they are made at Khiva from the root of some hard wood, and it is considered that all beverages taste better for being drunk from out of them.

If you wish to leave a favourable impression behind you of your visit, you would do well to provide yourself beforehand with little gold coins; English or French coins are preferred: these people having a mean

opinion of the Russian coinage. These you will give to the men as presents for their wives: they wear them as ornaments in thick rows suspended to their necks, forming a complete stomacher of gold coins. You will not be allowed to present them to the ladies yourself, so it is useless to seek that privilege. All that you will be likely to see of these particular daughters of Eve will be a pair of twinkling eyes occasionally peeping through the curtains of the tent. If you are sharp enough you will perceive that these eyes are invariably painted; and should the handkerchief or shawl covering of the head for a moment drop off, you will not fail to detect a thick covering of white-and-red paint on the face. Civilization meets and shakes hands in its extreme phases.

I have dwelt at some length on these details of a Kirghese encampment, because it is a good type, and will serve for that of other nomads. The Bashkirs, who live chiefly in the governments of Ufa and Orenburg, resemble the Kirghes in particulars of race, language, and religion; there is this considerable difference between them, that the Kirghes are a wholly nomad, and the Bashkirs only a half-nomad people. They are gradually being affected by the civilization around them, and adopting an agricultural mode of life; they form, as it were, the connecting link between the nomad Kirghis and the sedentary, industrial, town-living Tartar.

On the other side of the Volga, and all along its banks from Tzaritzin to its mouth, and away westward on the steppes between this river and the Don, the

A Kalmack Encampment.

Kalmuck or the Mongol wanders. His mode of life is very similar to that of the Kirghis: the two do not even differ immensely in personal appearance; they are both grimy, but the Kalmuck is the more grimy and glabrous of the two. He is proud of his yellow skin: he has a saying, "Yellow is gold, yellow is the sun, and yellow is the skin of the Kalmuck." Comparing him to the Kirghis, his eyes are smaller and farther apart, he has less or rather no eyebrows, his nose is flatter and his nasals wider, his cheek-bones are higher and his chin smaller, and his ears are truly tremendous. A Kalmuck, in fact, is a Kirghis exaggerated; a Kirghis a Kalmuck "diminished." On the other hand, books, writing materials, and other signs of culture, of which the Kirghis is wholly innocent, are to be found in the Kalmuck tent. They have schools, too, for the children: for boys long since, for the girls they have latterly established some. The Kalmuck children are precocious and sharp in the extreme; but it has been remarked that if they fail to catch the sense of anything at once, it can never be dinned into their heads. They must learn, as it were, by the "first intention," or not at all.

The Kalmuck dress consists of a long shirt, with a loose coat over it fastened with a belt; his boots, when he does not borrow the comfortable high Russian boot, is a shorter red morocco boot with very high heels (but not turned up at the toes), which, whilst it gives him the appearance of being much taller than he is, altogether spoils his walk. The

head-dress is pretty and picturesque; it consists of a round Astrakhan woollen hat, like that ordinarily worn by Tartars, with a square piece of yellow cloth stitched at the top, and surmounted with an overhanging red tassel. The women dress very much the same as the men. The children do not dress at all. In the bitterest cold they toddle about stark naked. The further you go into the interior of the Steppes the wilder and less civilized is the Kalmuck. These are said to be heathen, to eat raw horseflesh, the steaks occasionally cooked as a luxury by being placed under their saddles; but the Kalmucks on the borders of, and in contact with, civilization, at any rate, do cook their food. What, however, they never do is to kill their meat. No matter what disease it dies of, the beast must die naturally, and then he is fit to eat. Sometimes, in order to exercise the duties of hospitality, the Kalmuck will kill his meat, and having done so he will eat of it himself, but to satisfy his own requirements, never. His hereditary propensity to plunder is still strong in the Kalmuck. He will seldom let an opportunity pass unimproved. One thing alone will check him. Should an intended victim by any chance visit his tent, and partake of his hospitality, he is safe from violence from the host. But there is no solidarity among them in granting this immunity; it only applies to the particular Kalmuck whose tent has been visited: his next-door neighbour may plunder the stranger if he can. There is a peculiarity which distinguishes the Kalmuck from the Kirghis: the former performs

his commercial transactions by means of money, the latter by barter in a great measure. There are many rich men among them both: their wealth is estimated by the size of their herds.

In describing the Kalmuck dress, I forgot to mention the well-known fashion of shaving the head, except at the crown, from which their coarse black hair is braided into a queue, which falls down behind.—Having now referred to the pigtails of the men, I may as well mention the sheeps' tails. The Kalmuck and the Kirghis breed of sheep indulge in portentously long fat tails—so fat, indeed, that they impede their locomotion. In order to obviate this inconvenience, little wooden wheels are occasionally constructed, and the tails being placed on them, the centre of gravity is restored, an ingenious device, which might possibly be applied with advantage to certain modern toilettes. I make Mr. Worth a present of the hint. This custom the Kalmuck has borrowed from the Kirghis.—The prevailing religion is Buddhist—of such of them, at least, as are not Pagans. They have no objection to admit strangers to their religious services. These are remarkable, as they resemble nothing one has seen before. In two rows the worshippers are assembled—the priests and deacons squatting in front, the chief-priest leading: a low chant is begun in a monotonous drawling voice; and during its continuance, the two rows of officiating deacons keep swinging backwards and forwards in unison, with a lateral movement from the hips, a long string connected with two round boxes which stand

on either side of the altar, and which are thereby kept spinning at a tremendous rate round and round on their axes, evolving all the time prayers written on scrolls of parchment. This is praying by machinery with a vengeance. Then the sound of a thin flute is heard; and then a trumpet, then a louder trumpet, and then one louder still; and then, louder and louder crescendo, the blare of all the trumpets sounds terrific; the chief-priest all the while beating the time with energy, and then with fury, on a drum in front of him. With this climax the service concludes. What does it symbolize? Is it the fervour of devotion and the insistance of prayer?

Having visited Okak, and Serai, and Astrakhan, and the living representatives of races who once possessed these lands as conquerors and masters, it is time to go on board our steamer, and proceed on our way to Kasan and Nijni-Novgorod.

SARATOF.

CHAPTER IV.

SARATOF; THE COLONISTS, LITTLE RUSSIANS.

TRAVELLING on the Volga is not what it was in ancient times. Two centuries ago a famous pirate (Stenka Razin, the Rob Roy of the Volga), was the terror of the commerce on its waters. Like Pugatchef a century later, he joined to the character of a pirate that of a popular redresser of the wrongs of the poor; and he still lives in the memory and songs of the Russian people: the cave in which he lay hid with his booty in the Jigoulee hills is still shewn to the curious traveller. But it was not only in the days of Stenka Razin and of Pugatchef that travelling on the Volga was insecure: in the memory of the present generation bands of robbers infested the river; and the cumbersome maschinas, with their long trains of richly-freighted barges, fell easy victims to their rapacity: the primeval forests which line the river afforded them protection and refuge from the pursuit of justice; indeed, the police on the river were merely nominal. Independently, too, of the insecurity and risk involved, as many weeks were consumed as it now takes days to perform a journey on the Volga. The mode of travelling was either by barges towed by men or horses, or by the still more tedious and primitive contrivances called maschinas. The maschina was the tug of ancient days, to it a long

string of barges was attached; it was itself propelled by means of a hawser, one end of which was attached to an anchor sent on ahead in a small boat and dropped overboard, and the other end worked round a huge capstan on board the maschina by means of horses shipped on board for this purpose, who perambulated round the capstan as in a threshing machine: when the anchor was reached, it was taken up and sent on ahead another stage, and so on *ad destinatum*. As many as from 50 to 100 horses would sometimes be shipped on board for working the capstan. What, perhaps, suggested, and in some degree justified, this extraordinarily primitive mode of propulsion, was the difference in the price of horses at Astrakhan as compared with Nijni-Novgorod. At the former place horses could be bought from the Kalmucks and Kirghes for from 10 to 20 roubles each, and sold at the latter place with a profit sufficient to cover the expense of their conveyance. So attached, however, did the Russians become to this warping system, that for some time after steam came into use on the Volga it was to work the capstan and the small boat that it was first applied. The principle of warping was sacred. As you may conceive, however, the maschina was not able for very long to hold its own against the enterprise of this century; together with the pirates and many other time-honoured institutions, it has vanished from the face of the waters. To an Englishman, I believe, is due the honour of having placed the first steamer on the Volga. His example was soon followed, and to-day over five hundred steam-

ers vindicate the superiority of this mode of transport. More than one Company, the Drujina, and Kavkas and Mercurii Companies in particular, have started large two-decked steamers on the American pattern, in which the traveller finds as great comfort and convenience as if he were taking a trip on the Rhine or the Mississippi. A difficulty, indeed, will soon arise on the question of fuel; there is no coal on the Volga, and the steamers have to burn wood; the amount consumed by the insatiable steam-engine is something appalling. It will be long, perhaps, before the immense forests which are found along the Volga will be exhausted; but those nearest to its banks are rapidly disappearing, and the transport of wood from the interior very seriously enhances its price. As this distance increases, the price will proportionately rise, and the cost of fuel already occupies and troubles the minds of the directors. Probably when the price of wood has reached a certain figure, it will be found worth while to consider the propriety of working the beds of coal which are known to exist on the Don and the Kama. At present, however—and perhaps for some time to come—the cost of working them would be even greater than that of wood.

I was lucky enough to secure a passage in the "Alexander II.," belonging to the Kavkas and Mercurii Company. The steamer was large and airy, and very fast; and nothing could exceed the attention paid to passengers on board. The living, too, was decidedly better than at the majority of Russian hotels. There were a good many grave-looking Mohammedans on

board, merchants from Khiva and Bokhara, and Tartars from Kasan, most of them going to the fair of Nijni. Five times a-day would these faithful followers of the Prophet meet on the paddle-box of the steamer, and there, with their faces turned towards Mecca, and careless of the gaze of the curious, they would prostrate themselves in silent adoration of their great God. There was something so grave and reverent in their demeanour, so full of conscious dignity, that the most frivolous felt no inclination to ridicule a sight which must at any rate have been novel to many of them.

It got whispered about that there was a lady in the vessel who was a Nihilist. I honestly confess that I felt some curiosity to make the acquaintance of a lady bearing such a bad character. Judge, however, of my disappointment when I found my fair Nihilist to be nothing but the mildest of Liberals —what, in fact, we should call in England a strong Tory. She had gained the terrible appellation, the modern equivalent for Pyrrhonism, in consequence of some very just and sensible opinions on the question of the personal liberty of the subject, and perhaps still more from holding what are considered in Russia very heterodox views on the subject of the education and employments of her sex. Evidently woman's rights are under a cloud in Russia. I have since discovered that the term Nihilist is applied in Russia as the name Atheist often is in England, to designate every one indiscriminately with whom we happen to differ in opinion. It is a summary and convenient

mode of expression, and saves the trouble of discussion. Should any one wish to improve his acquaintance with the Nihilists, he can pursue the subject pleasurably in the charming pages of Tourgenieff's "Fathers and Sons."

The scenery in some parts of the Volga is very beautiful, more so to my taste than anything on the Rhine. The river itself—Mother Volga, as the Russians love to call it—is much grander than the German river. At Saratof it is two miles wide, and the scenery all along the Jigoulee, a range of wooded hills stretching from Samara to about half-way between Stavropol and Simbirsk, is magnificent, and of constantly changing aspect. At many other points you come upon little idyllic coves and wooded bays; though along a course of sixteen hundred miles much that is tame and featureless must of course be expected. After passing Tzaritzin, where the Volga and the Don, approaching nearest to each other, are connected by a "volok" or cross road, Saratof is the first place of any interest that you come to. It is a large and flourishing town, a great depôt for the corn trade, the finest qualities of wheat being grown in its neighbourhood. All around Saratof, and for a distance of from seventy to one hundred versts down the river, as far as the town of Sarepta, flourish a series of little colonies, bearing the German names of Schaffhausen, Glaris, Zürich, Catherinstadt. This last name gives us the key to their existence here. Not that any key is required for the secret of finding Germans in Russia, or indeed anywhere where money is to be made and

industry advantageously pursued. In Russia, in particular, they are to be found everywhere, especially in the towns. Who is it who makes the best boots in the village? A German. Who is it who keeps that large apothecary's shop at the corner of the principal street? A German. Who is the landlord of the best hotel in the high street of the market town? A German. Who is the chief medical man of the place? A German. Who is that incorruptible official, so methodical and unpleasant to deal with? A German; always a German. From the lowest trades to the highest branches of the Administration the German has monopolised Russia. He may, indeed, with some justice claim the credit of having, for value received, civilized it: he is not, however, for all that, loved in Russia. Many a sharp proverb has the quick-witted Sclave invented at his expense: "Spit where you like, you will always find a German;" again, "He's a clever fellow, the German; he even invented a monkey;" and many such besides.

You find the German everywhere in Russia; but on the Volga and in the district between Saratof and Sarepta you find the German "colonist." When the Russian talks of "a colonist" he means a German colonist: elsewhere the German mingles with his Russian fellows, and in two or three generations, losing all trace of his Teutonic nationality, becomes absorbed in the surrounding population. But in the "colony" this does not take place. Here he preserves intact his Teutonic ways, customs, language, and ideas; he intermarries only with Germans; his

schools are German, and on the German model; he does not take the trouble to learn the Russian language: it is the Russian who has to learn his. So great is the facility of Russians for picking up foreign languages that I am told that the Russians bordering on the "colony" pick up and exaggerate all the linguistic peculiarities which they hear. There are a great many Wurtembergers among the "colonists," and it is no uncommon thing to hear a neighbouring Russian saying to a little German baker boy, "Hascht du dasch Brod gebrracht?" as if chaffing the German in his own Suabian dialect.

I have said that the name Catherinstadt gives us the key to the existence of the German "colony" on the Volga. During the celebrated journey of Catherine the Great down the Volga, in order to view the condition of the "New Russia" which she had annexed, it did not escape her shrewd eye that those fertile banks only wanted a sufficient population to become the most flourishing part of her empire. She desired, moreover, to invite people of a higher culture and civilization than the natives, in order that the latter might learn more enlightened modes of agriculture, and be instructed and improved by the new settlers. With this view she offered many inducements to German colonists to settle here. They were to be exempt from taxation for fifty-two years, and from military conscription "for ever." Large numbers, especially from the Black Forest and from Saxony, availed themselves of the offer, and settled in the district in question; but the result was not exactly what Catherine

had intended. In the first place, the Germans settling in colonies, and associating only with their brother colonists, became very imperfect missionaries of civilization among a people whose language they never learnt. In the next place, the German is essentially an artisan. Pin him down to the country with no neighbouring town within reach, and he will no doubt become a steady and successful agriculturist. But only give him the chance of escaping to a city, and he will leave the plough and the harrow to take care of themselves, and hurry off to settle as a cobbler or bookbinder, a tailor or a clock-maker, in the more congenial atmosphere of a large town. The consequence has been that Catherine's German colonists did one of two things—they either flocked together in agricultural villages, where, leading an exclusively German life, they failed altogether in their civilizing mission, or else they scattered to the several towns on the Volga, and there practised the industrial arts, in which they easily surpassed and supplanted the aboriginal Russian artisan. Neither of these consequences did Catherine foresee. There has been trouble lately in the German colony: two years ago a law of universal military conscription was decreed in Russia: it applied equally to the German as to all the other subjects of the empire; but the German—Sadowa and Spicheren notwithstanding—is not a soldier by disposition: if there is one thing he detests beyond another it is the Allgemeine Wehrgepflicht. It is this which drives him from Fatherland to the plains of Kentucky and the backwoods of

America. And, lo! it is not for Fatherland that he is now to be called upon to serve, but for a country where he has no doubt grown fat, but which he has never learnt to call his own: and then there are the plain words of the Charter by which he was inveigled from his Black Forest—he was "to be exempt for ever from conscription." But he is kicking against the pricks. Alive to the exigencies of modern warfare, and determined at any cost to maintain her position in Europe, Russia laughs at the scruples of the poor German, to whom the alternative alone is left of military service or a second emigration. Many have preferred the latter, especially among the Mennonites, of whom there is a good sprinkling in the "Colony." A certain concession has been made to these German Quakers, which, however, by no means satisfies them: they are to be allowed the option of serving in the military train instead of in the line; and so only indirectly conduce to that shedding of blood from which their religious scruples make them shrink. They are, however, leaving the country in large numbers, and emigrating to America.

In the midst of the German colony of Saratof, and forming a kind of colony within a colony at a place called Slovoda Pacrowskaia, there is another interesting settlement. It is composed of "Little Russians," settled here originally by the same enterprising monarch who imagined the German colony, and considerably reinforced in the year 1843. The term "Little Russia" is properly applied to the Govern-

ments (Provinces) of Kiev, Tchernigof, Poltava, and Kharkof; but after the conquest of "New Russia" by Catherine, so many "Little Russians" were settled in "New Russia" that the term got improperly extended to the inhabitants of the whole of South Russia. There are thirteen millions of "Little Russians" as compared with thirty-six millions of "Great Russians," from whom they are in many respects distinguishable. Up to the time of Catherine they preserved the form of an Independent Republic under their Hettman or Chief, and a military organization, that of the Cossacks of the Ukraine or Border, with the duty of defending the frontiers of Russia from the Pole on the one side and the Turk on the other. When asked what he was, a "Little Russian" would answer proudly, not a Russian, but a "Cossack!" He was the rampart of the Empire, "the fortress behind the falls of the Dnieper." Catherine deprived them of their separate military and political organization, and thenceforth they became absorbed in the body of the Russian Empire; but for all that a "Little Russian" remains a "Little Russian," distinguishable from the neighbouring "Great Russian," by the possession of certain peculiar qualities and instincts, the result of the freer life which his ancestors led, and the tradition of deeds of daring and of prowess. The Governments which I have mentioned as constituting the country of "Little Russia" properly so called are well adapted for the rearing of cattle: the consequence is, that the possession of teams of oxen is an inseparable accident of

the agriculture of that country. Wherever, indeed, you see oxen yoked to carts, and the driver in a white blouse instead of the coloured rubashka (shirt worn outside the trousers) of the ordinary Russian peasant, you may be sure you see before you a "Little Russian." In consequence of this speciality in the agriculture of "Little Russians" Catherine was anxious to settle them in this neighbourhood, for it had been proved that the transport of salt, which was found in large quantities on these southern steppes, formerly covered by the sea, could be best effected by means of oxen, of which, however, there was a deficiency in these parts. To meet, therefore, the emergency, and supplement this want, Catherine and her successors offered liberal grants of land to "Little Russians," to induce them to settle here with their ox-teams. They were, moreover, to be exempted from the corn-tax on condition of transporting the salt from Lake Yelton and its neighbourhood to the Volga: hence the presence of "Little Russians" around Saratof. Since these times the Government has found it more advantageous to sell the salt on the spot to merchants, who undertake at their own expense to transport and diffuse it throughout the Empire. The little wooden huts where it used formerly to be stored and sold are still to be seen, on the right bank of the Oka, at Nijni-Novgorod.

Catherine the Great evidently treated her motley Empire like a pack of cards which would be all the better for a good shuffling; and if she should take a few court cards out of her neighbours' hands, so

much the better for the Empire. Little Russians here, Little Russians there, and Germans everywhere, seems to have been her fixed idea. Her modes of procedure were a little too artificial, according to our modern notions. Nature loves to sport with the provisions of man, and woman too. It is, moreover, reported that her courtiers played on the credulity of the great Czarina. As her triumphal course to the Crimea lay over desert and unpopulated districts, they had wooden sheds erected to represent villages on her passage, in order that she might be deluded into the belief that her "New Russia" was not a howling wilderness. I never credited this story; for I believe this of the great Empress, that if she had discovered the trickery which was attempted to be practised on her, she would have converted the delusion into a reality, by sending the courtiers who had devised it to inhabit for the remainder of their natural lives the sham villages which they had erected for her deception.

CHAPTER V.

SAMARA; THE KOUMIS CURE.

AFTER leaving Saratof and its "colonies," the next place of interest that we come to is Samara. This is the capital of a comparatively new Government, carved out of the neighbouring Governments of Simbirsk, Saratof, and Orenburg, and constituted into a separate Government in the year 1850. Situated on the left bank of the Volga, on the borders of Orenburg, on the high road to Asia, nearly every variety of race—Great Russians, Little Russians, Germans, Gipsies, Tschouvashes, Bashkirs, and Kirghes—are to be met with here; it is in this respect a miniature of the Russian Empire. It is a place too of considerable commercial importance. It is the northernmost point of the best wheat-growing district on the Volga, and there is a large and increasing commerce in grain and fat. Here, too, is the famous Koumis cure, which I shall proceed, in this chapter, to describe.

It had long been known that the Tartar tribes inhabiting what is generally known as Independent Tartary (no longer, however, since General Kaufmann's visit particularly independent), and the nomad tribes scattered over its northern frontiers, the Turkomans and the Kirghes, as well as other tribes more or less akin to these, such as the half-nomad Bashkirs of

Orenburg, all used fermented mare's milk, which they called koumis, not only as a beverage, but as a substantial portion of their daily food. It was reported to combine the nourishing properties of milk with the invigorating qualities of alcohol; indeed, among its other virtues it was said to exhilarate and to intoxicate. It came into the heads of some Russian medical men, of whom, I believe, Dr. Postnikoff, of Samara, to have been one of the first, that this koumis might possibly possess medical properties as well. It was observed that consumption and its cognate disorders were unknown among the tribes who habitually drank koumis. Starting from this observation, experiments were made on the *vilia corpora* of consumptive patients, and with highly beneficial results. Upon this Dr. Postnikoff started a koumis establishment at Samara: its situation offered him many advantages: in the first place, from its position on the Volga, it was at least approachable, whereas Orenburg, the nearest spot where koumis could be said to be indigenous, was the *ultima thule* of the civilized world. This new establishment on the Volga was the means, therefore, of pushing the koumis outposts 300 miles westwards. In the next place, it was observed that the pasturage at Samara was similar to that at Orenburg. It is supposed that the virtue of koumis consists in a great measure in the rich quality of the mare's milk, which again is dependent, not only on the race of mares, but on the pasturage on which they are fed. All these are propositions which are more or less vehemently affirmed and denied by the different camps

A Koumis Establishment at Samara.

into which koumis connoisseurs are divided. For my own part, without giving any opinion on so profound a subject, I would only venture in a very general way to observe that it is a very old idol of the human mind to mistake accidents for essentials, and to argue that, because things have been invariably seen in conjunction, they must necessarily be connected as cause and effect. However this may be, the *haute école* of koumis connoisseurs maintain that koumis, to be efficacious, must not only be composed of the milk of thoroughbred Tartar mares, but of thoroughbred Tartar mares fed on the rich covil of the steppes.

For covil (*stipa pennata*) is the technical name of the grass which grows on the steppes, and which is the favourite food of the mares. It flowers prettily in a kind of white silvery wave for about a month at the beginning of June, and makes a not ungraceful ornament for the hair, especially of blondes. It is only the tender grass, not the flower, of the covil which the mares graze on. In the midst of the covil the *absinthum tartaricum* grows abundantly, emitting the sweetest smell. I could not help fancying that this too must form part of the vaunted pasturage of the steppes: it smelt so sweet that I thought if I had been a Tartar mare I should certainly have made it a *bonne bouche*. I was glad to hear that my error had been shared by a learned German doctor, who, writing *à priori* in his study in Livonia on the medical properties of absinth, suggests that as it is found in large quantities on the steppes where

the Tartar mares graze, part, at any rate, of the virtue of koumis may be attributable to his favourite herb. It is to be hoped that the learned doctor's theory does not depend on his illustration, for it is, unfortunately, not founded on fact. The mares do not touch the absinth: the grass of the covil is their sole diet. The absinth, with its perfume, is there because the Tartar mare is an epicure, and she loves to regale one sense with the sweet odour of the absinth while the young blade of the covil ministers to another.

The Tartar horse, about whom all this fuss is made, is the most insignificant-looking brute dignified with the name of horse I ever saw. He exactly corresponds to the pictures one has seen, and the descriptions one has read, of the nondescript animals upon which the Cossacks were mounted during the invasion of France in 1814. Small, shaggy, and impoverished-looking, he hasn't the devilry in his eye which distinguishes the little Shetland pony. It is only when he is in action that he gives you a taste of his quality: he then bristles up, buckles to his work, and you begin to perceive, when you have already been half-a-day's journey, the enduring qualities of the little animal you have been contemning. Many days' continuous travelling at the rate of a hundred-and-fifty versts (a hundred miles) a-day will give you some idea of his powers. Those who deny the indispensableness of covil will for the most part maintain that there is no saving grace in koumis proceeding from aught but the milk of thoroughbred Tartar mares.

There are koumis establishments in Russia elsewhere than at Samara. At Czarsko Selo, in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg, as well as in the Sokolniki environ of Moscow, there are similar establishments. At both these places, although the precious covil does not flourish, the Tartar-bred mare is alone in vogue. I visited both these establishments, but fell in love with neither. In the first place the neighbourhood of a capital (and both St. Petersburg and Moscow are capitals) is an unfavourable situs for a "cure:" the contrast of a medical establishment with the surrounding associations is fatal to it: all such establishments have a melancholy and depressing look about them: phthisis, catarrh, and tubercles seem written on every brick and labelled on every bottle. I felt that I should have an attack of "nerves" if I stayed there ten minutes, and that all the Tartar mares in Russia could not restore me. If you are unlucky enough to require a "cure," go bury yourself alive as far from the habitations of men as you can; flee from the very neighbourhood of a city, far more a capital. Consider that situation the best which offers you the fewest resources, otherwise your labour is likely to be in vain, and your "cure" a mockery and a delusion. All these advantages, I may mention, are pre-eminently secured at Samara.

Besides these establishments at St. Petersburg and Moscow, Dr. Stahlberg, formerly at the head of the Moscow establishment, has set up a similar one at Wiesbaden, maintaining that the covil is all humbug, and that it is "the breed that does it." The sceptical

analysis is carried still farther; for in London there is a Russian (Polish) medical man, Dr. Yagielski, an authority on koumis, who goes so far counter to the received notions on the subject as to deny not only the indispensableness of Tartar mares for the production of koumis, but even of mares at all, actually giving the preference (tell it not in Gath and whisper it not in Samara) to the domestic cow. But I must leave the cow-produced koumis to its fate, and proceed with my description of the genuine covil-fed Tartar-bred mare's milk, koumis.

The process of manufacture is the following. I may mention that it is Bashkir girls who are generally employed to make it; it is their national beverage, and they best understand it: being less wild, too, than the nomad Kirghis, it is easier to "catch" this particular Tartar specimen.

Koumis is fermented mare's milk; an element of fermentation is consequently required for its manufacture. This is supplied by Koumis itself: a certain proportion (one-third) of koumis is poured together with (two-thirds of) fresh mare's milk into a clean wooden vessel, resembling an ordinary English churn, and there left for from six to eighteen hours, according to the degree of (alcoholic) strength that is required. During this period it is from time to time subjected to a churning process, with the object of keeping up and stimulating the process of fermentation: herein consists the chief art, and whatever secret there may be in koumis-making is to know the exact amount of churning required; for, although

a certain amount is requisite, it must be suspended at the point where curds or butter would be formed: habit and practice alone teach this to the koumis-maker. After this fermenting process, stimulated by the occasional churning, has lasted a certain time, say six hours, a portion of the contents of the churn is drawn off, and this constitutes the weakest kind of koumis, say koumis of the first degree of strength. The remainder in the churn is subjected to a further period of similar fermentation and churning, say for another six hours, and then the churn is again tapped, and koumis of the second degree of strength is the result. Then another period of say six hours of a similar process for what still remains in the churn, and this, when drawn off, constitutes koumis of the third degree of strength. It will be observed that the difference in the degree of strength of the koumis consists in the different amount of fermentation to which it has been subjected. The strength of the koumis ought to be graduated according to the requirements of different patients, and this is a matter of some importance in the case of invalids. As soon as it is drawn off it is poured into ordinary quart bottles, made with extra strong necks, corked down, and tightly strung; for, containing as it does large quantities of carbonic acid gas, it is subject to the explosive accidents of all such liquors. Indeed, the inexperienced koumis-drinker, on opening a bottle of koumis for the first time, if he is lucky enough not to lose his eye by the explosion of the cork, will most undoubtedly be soused all over by the frothing liquid.

I have mentioned that the koumis itself is the fermenting element used in the composition of koumis—one-third koumis for two-thirds fresh mare's milk. It may be asked, where koumis is not obtainable (as at the beginning of the koumis season), what substitute is used? A couple of table-spoonsful of yeast are put into an ordinary-sized quart bottle, filled with mare's milk, which is allowed to ferment for twenty-four hours: the contents of this bottle are then poured into double the quantity of fresh mare's milk, and allowed to ferment for twenty-four hours more: then twice the amount of fresh mare's milk is again added, the whole fermenting for twenty-four hours more. Thus a sufficient amount of the fermenting element is obtained to begin operations, the proportion 1:3 being always maintained between the fermenting element and the fresh milk. Some patients drink as much as six or eight bottles of koumis a-day; some subsist entirely on it; but, generally speaking, people eat their ordinary meals and drink koumis between. It has a sharp and bitter taste, caused by the lactic acid, which it contains in large quantities; and the strongest sorts of all leave a kind of soft buttery after-taste, which, however, the carbonic acid gas helps to dissipate. Some people never can get over their dislike to the taste of koumis, and those it is never likely to benefit.

The complaints for which koumis is considered beneficial are consumption and, it may be said generally, all affections of the mucous membrane. It is, of course, a mistake to suppose koumis a specific for consumption:

it is nothing of the kind. People sometimes go to Samara in the last stages of that disease, when neither koumis nor anything else can avail them; but in the early stages of consumption it often effects, by its strengthening properties, a beneficial change in the organism of the patient, and helps to arrest the ravages of the disease. Where, however, it is of sovereign efficacy is in cases of recovery from a long and wasting illness, where no organic detriment exists. Often, in such cases, after a couple of months koumis-drinking, the system is braced up, the blood streams more quickly through the veins, the pulsation increases, and a general feeling of *bien être* pervades the whole man.

Not that I feel inclined to attribute the whole benefit which is derived from a cure at Samara to the properties of koumis: the fine, dry, rarefied air of the steppes has undoubtedly something to do with it. The lungs are called into active play, and lend their assistance to the general recuperative process. You feel the dryness of the air at Samara. In the higher parts of the steppes there is no dew: the most delicate and consumptive patient can admire, with impunity, the beauties of the setting sun—and the sunsets are very beautiful at Samara. He is not obliged, as in Italy, to flee that treacherous hour: he can sit out of doors without risk, and watch that setting sun reflected on the Jigoulee hills, which here skirt the Volga, fringing with gold the clouds that crown the summits of those glowing hills, and lighting up the whole expanse of the river with liquid glittering fire.

There is no fixed duration for a "cure" at Samara. The average stay of patients is two months, but as koumis is rather a diet than a medicine, their stay is often prolonged beyond this period. The weather is the chief regulator in this respect; fine hot weather is considered essential for a "cure:" June, July, and August are the finest months.

The koumis establishments, of which there are three principal and several smaller ones at Samara, are situated at distances varying from six to twelve versts (four to eight miles) from the town, and are composed not of single blocks of buildings, but of little detached houses, mostly built of wood, containing from two to six, and rarely as many as eight rooms each, the whole connected with, that is, surrounding, a larger building, which is the kursaal of the little colony; or, where a kursaal does not exist, a central kitchen, which ministers to the culinary requirements of the whole. When there is a kursaal, the patients can either dine there at a *table d'hôte*, or separately in their own apartments.

I have used the term "colony" to describe these koumis establishments; it best depicts the effect which they produce on one at first sight. There, in the midst of the desert steppe, with few signs of human habitation around, you suddenly come upon a little wooded oasis, surrounded by a paling, and dotted about with a number of little single-storied wooden houses, resembling overgrown mushrooms, with zigzag walks or terraces cut in every direction, and queer-looking people, men and women, walking

about—all drinkers at all watering-places are peripatetics—with a quart bottle in one hand and a large mug in the other—and you know that you are at a koumis establishment.

The three principal establishments at Samara are Dr. Postnikoff's, Anayeff's, and Jourawlew's. There can be no doubt, I think, of the superiority of the first to all others. In the first place, it is no mean advantage, in the case especially of patients who require medical advice, and in a place, too, so far from civilization, that its head is a medical man. Anayeff and Jourawlew are mere merchants in Samara, who have built their establishments as commercial speculations, and do not even reside there, but in the town of Samara: knowing nothing about koumis or its manufacture, they are entirely in the hands of the Bashkir girls who make it, and can exercise no control over them. Dr. Postnikoff, on the contrary, who from long experience knows more about it than they do, exercises a strict control over its manufacture, and regulates carefully the different degrees of strength which each patient's koumis should contain: in the next place, his wife is an English lady, and as such understands the meaning of the word "comfort," and ministers to her husband's patients in a variety of ways which are still secrets hidden from the uninitiated Russian mind: further, the situation of this establishment is better than that of the others. Anayeff's is too near the Volga, which in fact it overhangs, and is consequently subjected to damp exhalations at night. Jourawlew's avoids this error:

it is situated well inland, but unfortunately, it falls into another vice,—it is choked with trees and shrubs, so that the fine bracing air of the steppes, which is as essential for a cure as the koumis, in vain struggles to force itself a passage through a dense forest of foliage. The roads too leading to this establishment are simply shocking. After a day's rain they are, for a mile on every side of you, impassable, so that you are shut up within the precincts of his palings like a besieged resident in a koumis fortress.

You must not expect, as I have hinted, amusement at Samara: social life is there in a condition of suspended animation. The exhilarating effects of koumis are not visible to the naked eye. You can, if you wish it, find fairish fishing in the river Samarca, which flows into the Volga close by, and the double snipe, the duck, and even the wild swan, are found about its banks; but you can scarcely pursue a "cure" and sport advantageously together: you will probably be too anxious to finish your "cure" and quit Samara, to trouble yourself about the double snipe. I was sceptical on the subject of wolves, which I was told were occasionally to be met with on the steppes even in summer, till I came across one myself one morning in the neighbourhood of Jourawlew's. It was a she wolf, and was working about in a circle in the long grass like a pointer in search of game, and allowed one to approach within fifteen yards of it; it had a "lean and hungry look" about it, but by no means "dangerous;" so little so, indeed, and such a careworn family air about her

did the poor brute carry, and it was so probable that she was hunting for food to take to a litter of hungry cubs in the neighbouring wood, that it was impossible to shoot her: it would have been compound murder to have done so. Perhaps, if it had belonged to the opposite sex, one's reflections might have been different. Everything in this world depends on the point of view from which you regard a thing. And yet, surely, if a wolf of either sex has the "right of existence" anywhere, must it not be on the steppes of Russia?

So much for Samara and its famous koumis cure. If you don't lose your eye by an explosive cork, or get eaten up by a wolf, or stick in Jourawlew's mud, or die of ennui, or run off with the gipsies, you will probably be all the better for the koumis.

CHAPTER VI.

KASAN; TARTARS, TSCHOUVASHES, TCHEREMES, MORDVINS, VOTIAKS.

AT Samara the range of the Jigoulee Hills makes its appearance along the Volga, and continues till you come to about half way between Stavropol and Simbirsk. Along the whole of this range the scenery is truly beautiful, and so varied, too, that the eye never tires of it; and when you leave these laughing hills behind you, you regret them as old friends who have entertained you pleasantly on your journey. Simbirsk was formerly a flourishing place, one of the old aristocratic towns of Russia, but its glory is now fast departing: the emancipation of the serfs ruined the nobles, and their properties are being rapidly bought up by rich merchants. Nor can it, like Saratof, become a place of first-rate commercial importance. The corn which is grown here is not the fine white wheat, the "belotourka" of Saratof, but the "roj," or black wheat, and other inferior qualities. We may, therefore, class Simbirsk in the rank of decaying towns: its old aristocratic prestige is departing, and no new causes of prosperity are discernible.

Our next stage is Kasan: here a rich harvest of interest awaits us. The town itself is beautifully situated on a rising ground seven versts from the

Variety of Races in Russia:—

Tartars, Tcheremes, Tschouvashes,
Votiaks, Little Russians,
Old Russians, &c.

river, from which the white crenellated walls of its kremlin are conspicuous. About a mile from the town you pass a monument on your left hand which arrests your attention; it is in the form of a mausoleum, and has been built over the remains of those who fell at the siege of Kasan: steps lead you down into the catacombs, where you see collected together, and laid side by side, the bones of those who fell fighting against each other three centuries ago, the defenders of the Crescent and the champions of the Cross. Driving through the streets of Kasan you are reminded of Moscow, and you are not surprised to hear that it is sometimes called "Little Moscow" by the Russians: it is, however, still more Eastern-looking than Moscow. Its numerous Tartar inhabitants give it this colouring; they form a substantial proportion of the whole population. Kasan, as I have already stated, was the capital of one of the three Tartar khanates, into which the successors of Tamerlane divided Russia: they lasted from the beginning of the fifteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. At this latter period the whole of Russia became more or less united under the Grand Prince, now called the Czar, of Moscow, whereas divisions and jealousies reigned in the khanates. The consequence was that John the Terrible, appearing with a large army before Kasan, took it, and so ended the khanate of Kasan in 1552. Its fall involved that of Astrakhan two years later. The third Turkish khanate, that of the Crimea, after various vicissitudes, became Russian only in 1783.

When Kasan fell, its surviving Tartar population all fled from it.

Catherine the Great, who knew the value of this sturdy and industrious population, tried to coax them back, and with this view she built them a mosque at Kasan. A policy of conciliation was in time successful, and the Tartar population gradually returned to the homes of their forefathers: there are now many thousands of them living in the Tartar quarter of the town, some of them among the richest merchants of the place; they have numerous mosques in different parts of the town, and a boys' school, under the direction of the Mullah, attached to each mosque. Here the system known in England as Bell and Lancaster's is practised—the elder boys teaching the younger, throughout a hierarchy of ages; there are no paid teachers besides the mullah: in this way one mullah suffices for the instruction of a school of many hundred boys. This system is indigenous to the East, where the Jesuit missionaries first learnt it, and hence imported it into Europe. The schools are not day, but boarding-schools, the boys cooking their own food, which is of a very simple kind, and performing all the other household duties themselves; in this way servants as well as teachers are dispensed with, and the school is rendered in a great measure self-supporting as well as self-teaching. The expense of a very large school conducted on these principles is consequently very small; such expenses as must be incurred are defrayed by the rich Tartar merchants in the district: the schools are entirely gratuitous.

The Kremlin at Kasan.

The girls are not left entirely without education: there are no girls' schools, but the mullah's wife has day-classes for those who like to attend them. Everything, however, connected with the sex is the weak part of the Mohammedan system. The Tartars of Kasan have a good reputation for industry and thrift; they are not, however—the Prophet and the mullah notwithstanding—immaculate on the subject of strong drinks: when detected and brought to book by their mullah, they will excuse themselves by saying that it is not vodka but balsam, (not gin but physic), that they have been taking.

The favourite occupations of the poorer class of Tartars are those connected with horses, for which they have a peculiar and national aptitude: any form of horse-dealing is their delight. The drosky-driver in Kasan is generally a Tartar; his drosky and his horse constitute his capital: if by any stroke of bad fortune his horse dies, he will say "Tak Dir" (it is God's will); and when this malady of "Tak Dir" is on him, he will often leave his family and his home, and, starting off far away, remain for years a wanderer on the face of the earth. The Tartar women, who live the secluded life of all Eastern women, are naturally idle and lazy; they are much given to painting their eyes and nails; they go about with their heads covered with a handkerchief (*joulók*), and a shawl (*châle*), under which they play hide-and-seek, covering and uncovering and discovering their faces, in the most coquettish manner. Indeed, I am tempted to say that the *châle* plays the same *rôle*

with the Tartar woman as the fan does with the Spanish woman; the coquetry of both would be maimed if deprived of its favourite weapon.

Unlike most Mohammedans, the Tartars of Kasan have no objection to strangers visiting their mosques even during the hours of service; they will even offer them chairs, that they may be seated during its continuance. The interior of a mosque at Kasan is very simple; it consists of a large square hall, not unlike a Masonic hall; there is a window with coloured glass in the south corner, and a lamp burning on either side of it; a kind of pulpit stands in the south-west corner; beyond this there is no furniture nor decoration of any kind. The floor is covered with matting; and on entering the sacred building the Tartar takes off the goloshes (*gaoush*) which cover his soleless leather boots (*etâk*), and leaves them in the vestibule; he puts them on again on leaving the building. The service is equally simple: clothed in their long, silken selians, the congregation, which, as is well known, consists only of men, marches slowly and ceremoniously, headed by their mullah, to the end of the mosque. The ceremony of the service may be divided into three parts: for some moments they stand up in a single row, apparently absorbed in silent meditation; a few words are then uttered in a low chanting tone, the congregation occasionally raising the palms of their hands to their heads, the thumbs touching the ears, and occasionally bending their bodies slowly down—still standing—with their hands on their thighs, and then rising slowly up

Pagan Tschouvashes.

again; they then kneel down, sitting on their feet turned inwards, the right toe pointing to Mecca. In this position they bend their bodies down, touching the floor three times with their foreheads; they then rise to their feet, and a kind of military evolution takes place; they take open order in two rows, half their number standing in the rear rank; and much the same ceremony takes place as before. Then another and a final evolution. They all kneel (in the same fashion) in a circle, with the mullah in the group, and an apparently silent conference takes place; after which they all rise to their feet, and the service is concluded. They walk out in the same grave and solemn manner that they entered. It was impossible not to be favourably impressed with the general character of the service and the demeanour of the men. An air of earnestness and of faith pervaded the whole atmosphere of the place. We visited several Tartar houses, but those of the richer merchants were provokingly European-looking, and whenever the women were present our passage was barred: we seemed to cause quite as much curiosity among those fair mysteries as they excited in us, for we now and then caught a glimpse of them, and they always appeared in as great a flutter as if we had come to carry them off to "White Arabia."

Just as in the neighbourhood of Astrakhan we find the ruins of Okak, the site of the ancient capital of the Kazars, so in the neighbourhood of Kasan are to be seen the ruins of Vrachimof, the ancient capital of the Bulgarians: they are situated near a town

called Spank and the monastery of Uspenskoi, about half way between Kasan and Simbirsk. The Bulgarians have long been a stumbling-block to the ethnologist. Were they Sclaves, Turks, or Ugrians (Fins)? Each theory has had its advocates. The adherents of the famous Fin hypothesis (viz., that all Europe was peopled by Fins before the Indo-Germanic invasions from the East) have seen in Vrachimov the capital of a primitive Ugrian race. The discovery of Turkish inscriptions among its ruins has lent colour to the Turkish theory; whilst Panslavists, who see Sclaves everywhere, have not been behindhand in claiming the Bulgarians as their own.

Some light has recently been thrown on this *quæstio vexata*, by the discovery among these ruins of an inscription with a number of Tschouvash words. The inference drawn from this is that the Bulgarians may have been a people, the modern representatives of whom are the Tschouvashes. What lends additional weight to this theory is the fact that Nestor, the monk of Kief, who wrote in the twelfth century of our era, in his enumeration of all the peoples who inhabited Russia, whilst mentioning the Bulgarians, Mordvins, Tcheremes, Votiaks, and others, omits all mention of the Tschouvashes; and yet we know from inscriptions that the Tschouvashes existed (under whatever name they may have gone by) in his day. May it not have been that the identity of Bulgarians and Tschouvashes was the cause of the omission of the latter name in the Annals of Nestor? There have been many theories about the Bulgarians, and many

theories about the Tschouvashes: it is some relief to think that these two people may perhaps have been the same, and that one set of theories will do for both. Supposing them, however, to be the same people, the further question remains, to what branch of the human family did they belong? For a long time the Ugrian theory prevailed, but their language was a great stumbling-block; on the other hand, in manners, customs, superstitions, and even physiognomy, they resembled Ugrians. At present the Turk theory is in the ascendancy; the many Turk affinities in their language have inclined the balance to this side. If, indeed, they are Ugrians, Dr. Latham points out a very remarkable consequence, viz., that we must modify the theory according to which Turk and Ugrian have been placed in distinct classes, and that these two families of mankind may have to be brought under a common denomination.

I will close this chapter with a description of this puzzling people, and also of the probably kindred races of the Tcheremes, Mordvins, and Votiaks, all of whom are to be found, the first in large numbers, in the Government of Kasan. One of the chief characteristics of all these races is their Paganism: purer remains of heathenism are to be found among them than anywhere else in the civilized world: even where they have been converted to Christianity, their Christianity is only skin-deep, a thick substratum of Paganism remains. The Tschouvashes differ from the Tcheremes in the names of their gods, but they agree with them in thinking that there is a father and mother of the

gods—and a devil. They have two ineradicable propensities—1st, to get drunk; 2nd, to steal horses: the Government has exerted itself in vain to check both vices. Nothing will prevent the Tschouvash besotting himself over the grave of his ancestors, nor will he let an opportunity slip of stealing a horse. He has too a curious superstition, which has cost him dear: it is not to mow the grass till Elias' day (our 1st August), otherwise, he says, Elias will cause hail to come and destroy his crops; the consequence is, that his hay is generally tough and valueless. The Tschouvash corn has the reputation of being superior to the Russian, but his hay is unsaleable; notwithstanding this, nothing will induce him to alter his custom or give up his superstition. They have the credit of being the most choleric people in the world; they are subject to quite uncontrollable fits of passion: when one of these fits is on them, they have been known to go to the house of a person who has offended them, and there hang —— themselves; they think they thus bring *sukhaya bada* (the curse of utter doom) on that man's house. In a social point of view, this is a refinement on the practice of killing one's enemies.—The chief peculiarity in the dress of the women is the perfect "stomacher" of coins with which they adorn their breasts. Only the married women wear caps; the girls let their thick black hair stream down on each side of their face, and present a wild and weird appearance.

The Tcheremes offer no such ethnological difficulty as the Tschouvashes; they are a pure Ugrian (Fin)

Tchermes.

race, remains of the primitive people who once covered the whole face of Russia, before they were impinged upon by the Sclaves on the one side, and the Turks on the other. They are divided into two classes or families: 1. The wood Tcheremes; 2. The hill Tcheremes; the wood Tcheremes are the less civilized of the two, and they are for the most part pagans; they are hunters, and bee-keepers, but are so lazy that their bees generally die in the winter for want of proper care; they are much given to strong drinks, and if a neighbour invites them to his house, they never leave it till the last drop of liquor in it is exhausted. They have the reputation of being great misers, and hide their treasures in the ground from the knowledge of their wives and families, till compelled by necessity to dig it out. Juma, or Jumala (the great Ugrian deity) is their god, and when the season for their festival (Keremet) arrives, they retire to the holiest part of their forests, and there offer sacrifices—animals to the bad, and flowers to the good demons. They have a sacred song, of which I shall quote two verses which are remarkable, the first for its naïve simplicity, the second for its subtle wisdom:—

"1. Grant that in our bargains we may make three times the value of our goods.

"2. When we travel to a distance, protect us, O Juma, from wicked men, *stupid people*, bad judges, and slanderous tongues!"

These people may be heathens, but they are certainly no fools.

The hill Tcheremes are very superior to their bre-

thren of the woods in point of civilization; they are healthy, strong, and industrious; their villages, interspersed with trees and flowers, are neater and more picturesque than those of the Russians; they are now mostly Christians, though they are reputed to understand but little of the tenets of their new faith.—The dress of the women consists of a white woollen kaftan (*mezbar*) with a black band, and their legs and feet are greaved with felt twisted round them; they wear long strings of coins as earrings.

The Mordvins are still less distinguishable from the Russians than the Tcheremes, to whom they are in race akin; they are remarkable for their great facility in picking up languages, of which they often master three or four, speaking Mordvin among themselves, Tschouvash to the neighbouring Tschouvashes, Russian to the Russians, and Tartar to the Tartars: they are very diligent in field-work, and are altogether a very prosperous community. The chief peculiarity in their dress is the headgear of their women; this consists of a kind of tight-fitting helmet of coins strung together, and coming over their foreheads as far as their eyebrows: the effect is rather good.

The Votiaks bring us to the end of our catalogue of races on the Volga. A quarter of their number are Pagans, worshippers of Inmoru and other gods: although fatalists, they are good agriculturists, and are remarkable for a quality which in Tschouvashes and wood Tcheremes we call stinginess, but in them is rather over-prudence. They will store up corn for ten or twelve years, until, in fact, it spoils, keeping it against

VOTIAKS.

"sukhaya bada," the day of necessity. It is the Russians who call them Votiaks; they call themselves "ut" or "murt," signifying "man." The chief peculiarity in the dress of their women consists in the gorgeously-coloured aprons which they wear, and in the picturesque high-peaked caps worn by the married women.

We have now visited all the towns and colonies of interest on the Volga. It is time to get on board our steamer for the last portion of our journey to Nijni; I cannot, however, do so before I have accosted that extraordinary-looking old woman, who, with a stick in one hand, a basket in the other, a pack on her back, a water-bottle at her side, and literally muffled up to the eyes, is wending her solitary way in the direction I am going. Who is she? where on earth does she come from? where is she going? what has she got in her packs? what's her occupation? how old is she? She is sixty years old; she is a pilgrim; she has trundled on foot, her baggage on her back, from Irkutsk, at the furthest limits of Siberia, four thousand miles away, through Orenburg and Kasan, on her way to Kief, the sacred city, to the Catacombs of the Saints. Her baggage consists not of the impedimenta of this world; the basket in her hand contains her household gods, the gilt image of her patron saint; the bottle by her side is to receive the sacred water which will restore her failing sight; the pack on her back holds the candles destined to burn before the image of the saint. She has left home and all that is dear to her on earth, with slight hope of seeing

them again, because she cannot die in peace without performing the sacred pilgrimage. And she is not a solitary fanatic, this old woman; she is only one of hundreds and of thousands who annually encumber the roads to Kief from the extremities of this vast Empire, urged by the same motive, and prompted by the same desire of doing the will of their Maker and working out the salvation of their souls: they are a weird and motley crew. Has the restlessness engendered by the monotony of present life anything to do with the passion which propels them?

CHAPTER VII.

NIJNI-NOVGOROD. FIRST ASPECT OF THE FAIR.

SOME four or five hours before you reach Nijni-Novgorod, you pass, on the right bank of the Volga, a square white-washed block of buildings, the famous Monastery of St. Macarius: it was here that the great annual fair, which we are on our road to visit, was formerly held. After a fire, which raged there in the year 1818, it was removed to its present site, by order of the Emperor Alexander I. The scenery between Makarief and Nijni is now and then pretty enough; the heavily-laden barges bringing goods up to Nijni and carrying goods down, which you now begin to meet more frequently, give the river an animated appearance; there is movement and bustle in the air, and you feel that the great Yarmark is not far distant. Suddenly the country on the right bank of the river assumes a new aspect; a high mountainous range rises abruptly from the plain below; the steamer, avoiding a sandbank at this point, turns rather sharply to the left, rounding the headland and passing a pretty Tyrolese-looking village (Podnoveye) situated on the slope of the mountain range. By this sudden turn there is an abruptness in your approach to Nijni-Novgorod which enhances the effect of the scene which is now stretched before you.

All the large cities on the Volga (Samara alone excepted), Saratof, Simbirsk, Kasan, and Nijni-Novgorod, are situated on the picturesque and hilly side of the Volga, that is, on its right bank, for the left bank is flat and featureless throughout. The only thing which distinguishes Nijni-Novgorod from the others is that its range of hills is higher, and its situation consequently more imposing. As you slacken steam and slowly move up to the landing quay, the intervening country between the village of Podnoveye and Nijni is eminently picturesque. Two white buildings, the Pajorski Monastery and the St. Mary's Institution for Girls, are conspicuous amidst the varied foliage which surrounds them; and now the gilded cupolas of the cathedral glitter in the sun; and the white crenellated walls of the ancient kremlin, creeping up the precipitous slope of the hill, flanked here and there by small square minaret-shaped towers, with the old town reposing under the shadow of its fortress and looking down serenely on the busy scene below, give to Nijni-Novgorod an appearance unique among Russian cities. The town of Nijni consists of two parts: the old town, or *haute ville*, properly so called, nestling around its kremlin, and proudly disdainful of the commercial advantages offered it by the proximity of two great rivers; and the new town, or *basse ville*, consisting of the new quays built along the right bank of the Oka, and the new streets which have sprung up behind them.

To an English eye the shipping on the river, or rather rivers, although considerable, is not imposing.

No forest of masts is to be seen there as on the Thames, the Humber, or the Mersey; but you must remember that the navigation on the Volga is entirely inland, and that a great proportion of the rich merchandise which it carries on its bosom is transported in deep-bottomed barges, which have no masts, but are tugged in long trains by the steamers in the river. The effect produced on the eye by almost any number of such barges is not imposing. Formerly the shipping, such as it is, was all crowded together, and a careless spark on board one boat endangered the whole fleet. A destructive fire on the river two years ago awakened the authorities to the danger of such a method; and now not only has the shipping been divided into manageable groups, but two steamers with powerful fire-engines on board have been placed by the Government on the river, to maintain order among the shipping, and as a safeguard against fire. A little to the west of the kremlin, and on the same level with it, a high red-bricked tower, obtrusively situated, catches your eye: you scarcely want a high tower from which to view the scene below, for the whole town is a high tower, and, if you mount there at all, every point will be conspicuous below. However, the Tower of Mouravieff (so called from a former Governor who built it) is so temptingly situated to take a bird's-eye view of the whole extent of the Yarmark, that you repress your natural inclination to plunge at once into its labyrinths, and you hire a droshky-boy to drive you as quick as he can to "yon high tower." Your little Tartar horse, working at his

collar with the best of wills, can scarcely master the steep hill, which leads along a deep ravine to the upper town.

Arrived at the summit of your tower, the view which now strikes your eye is perhaps the most remarkable in the world. There, embraced within the compass of a glance, is the whole scene of the Great Fair of Nijni-Novgorod. A huge flat sandy plain, flanked by two great rivers, is covered over with houses of different colours, mostly red and yellow, made of brick and wood and matting; millions of this world's richest merchandise stored or strewn in every direction; churches, mosques, and theatres rising in their midst; two hundred thousand human beings more or less engaged in buying, selling, trafficking, pushing, jolting, hurrying, in every direction; barges warped along the quays of two rivers still busily engaged in unshipping their exhaustless cargoes. At one glance you see all this. You begin to think that you have done well to mount this tower, and by the help of a good glass you hope to be able to take your bearings of the fair. The river at your base is the Oka, and running at right angles to it, at the point exactly opposite to where you are, the still mightier Volga mixes its waters with it. From the apex of the triangle, two sides of which are formed by these rivers, and stretching further than the eye can see, is the enormous plain which I have just described. Amidst the varied and disordered scene, a little way to your left, close to the Oka, and about a mile from the Volga, you easily detect, from its contrast with the surround-

ing disorder, an oblong mass of yellow houses ranged in regular rows. This is the fair properly so-called, the "Inner Temple" of commerce as it were, whereas all the rest beyond it, and on all sides of it, though covering ten times its area, would in a governmental point of view be designated its outer courts; for this oblong block of storehouses was what originally constituted the Nijni Yarmark; it was built by the Government, and is still owned by the Government, by whom the houses are let to the different merchants; it consists of twelve long rows of streets, divided into four equal parts by three transverse streets running across them: there are thus twelve by four, or forty-eight streets, which, allowing for about twelve shops to each street, gives us a total of 576 shops. The whole is surrounded on three sides by a canal in the shape of a horse-shoe, which is traversed by eight bridges. At the open side, that nearest the Oka, instead of the canal is a square, where the Governor's official residence, and that of the Chief of the Police, during the continuance of the fair, are situated.

You can just detect little low square towers running round the buildings inside the water enclosure. These are the stone-constructed *cloacæ* of the fair. Every street too is doubled by a gallery, which follows its whole course underground, and is flushed with water, worked by pumps, several times a-day; these *cloacæ maximæ* of the Nijni Yarmark are certainly the wisest and most creditable part of the work of the Government. Although this "Inner Temple" is the centre or heart, it must not be supposed that it is

the chief part of the fair: the Nijni Yarmark has grown out of its swathing clothes. The "Outer Courts," the enormous faubourgs, larger than cities, which have grown up around it, have eclipsed the original habitation of commerce, and now themselves contain the most valuable products of the fair: the tea from Kiakhta, the cotton from Khiva, the iron from the Oural, all are here. The last product I have mentioned—the iron, which is one of the most valuable of all the commodities brought to Nijni, is stored on a little sand-island on the Oka, about a mile from its junction with the Volga, and nearly opposite the entrance of the "Inner Temple" of the fair. The barges which convey this iron from Perm down the Kama, and up the Volga, are moored alongside this island. Along the bridge which joins it to the mainland a tramway has been laid down, on which strongly constructed carriages, capable of carrying 600 poods (3 and 1-10th poods are 1 cwt.) each, convey the iron to the railway station, some two or three miles distant.

Along the Volga, from its point of junction with the Oka, and for some versts along its course, is what is called the Siberian Wharf, along which are moored the boats and barges which bring the merchandise to the fair. When we descend there we shall see the sturdy Tartar labourer busily engaged in unshipping the apparently exhaustless treasures of these boats, and for a scene of life and animation this is probably the most interesting part of the fair. At the furthermost extremity of this wharf you can detect with your glass the piles of cubic tsibecks of Kiakhta tea, and

Nijni-Novgorod, from the Governor's House in the Town.

the low mat-houses, or zinofkas, of the tea-merchants: next to them, and nearer to you, are apparently miles of bales of cotton, heaped in a long line on the top of one another; then pyramids of cow-hides, out of which the felt leggings of the Russian peasant will be made; and also thick heaps of other hides, which, as you see all the droshky-horses shying at them, you justly conclude are horse-hides. Jars of petroleum and sulphuric acid, and casks of dried fruit from the Caucasus, lie scattered about in irregular piles all along the quay. The "Outer Courts," or faubourgs, of the fair can be conveniently divided into two parts; that on the east, between the "Inner Bazaar" and the Volga, and that on the opposite, or western, side of the "Inner Bazaar;" the former is the more important of the two. Besides the tea and cotton, and other goods which I have mentioned, there are countless other merchant encampments scattered over this large area, and in their midst churches, hotels, theatres, mosques, and traktirs innumerable. In the western faubourg you see, beyond the line of some further merchandise, the Cossack barracks, an office for the transport service, the railway-station, the central fire-station, a tower a hundred feet high, containing the cisterns which supply the water pressure in case of fire, an Armenian church, a casino, the famous restaurant of Nikita Egoroff, and, at the furthest extremity of all, the equally famous Kunavin suburb, consecrated to pleasure.

I had almost forgotten to mention what, however, is the first thing that strikes one's eye on looking

down on the fair, viz. a huge red building, which is the new cathedral that is being constructed at the angle formed by the junction of the two rivers: it is not yet completed, but, as far as one can at present judge, it is about as ugly a looking edifice as could have been devised. Its colour, size, and shape are out of keeping with everything around; and if I had not been assured that it was a cathedral, I should certainly have thought that it was a new Tower of Babel being built by these polyglottish merchants for some occult reasons of their own. I am not yet quite convinced.

Having taken our bearings as accurately as we could, it is time to descend from our tower and take a rapid drive through the busy scene which we have been surveying. On reaching the quays below, a low wooden bridge, very like that which spans the Rhine at Mayence, crosses the Oka at a point about a verst distance from its embouchure, and is, except by water, the only means of communication between the town and the fair. Behold crowds on foot, in carriages, and on horseback; droves of bewildered cattle driven by bearded wild-looking men in their greasy polushubas; carts heavily laden with jars, casks, sacks, boxes, and unwieldy lengths of timber; grave-looking Orientals, with their flowing khalats and shining papakhas, alone imperturbable in the midst of the thronging crowd; the din, the trampling, the confusion, all vastly aggravated by the mounted Cossacks, who, placed at intervals along the line on their restive horses, in order to keep order, add greatly to

the general confusion. Add to all this that after it has been raining a whole day—and it often rains at Nijni—the roads are not ankle deep nor knee deep, but hip and thigh deep in slushing mud, and you will probably reflect that the "Suave mari magno" of the Latin poet would be charmingly illustrated from the top of Mouravieff's tower, and you will for a moment hesitate to cross the Rubicon which leads to the Empire of Commerce beyond. After you have fought your passage across this bridge, you immediately come upon a building which is crowded by shrewd and eager-looking men: it is the Bourse of the fair, called (*lucus a non lucendo*) the Corn Exchange, every conceivable commodity in the world except corn being there exchanged. However, before Saratof, and still more Rybinski, assumed their present importance as great corn markets, corn, like everything else, was brought to Nijni to be sold. Close to the Bourse is a little chapel always crowded with suppliants (I wonder whether my readers recollect one of the verses of the hymn to Jumala), and where nuns and monks with money-boxes stand sentinel, admirably placed to catch the offerings of the superstitious, if not devout, merchant about to make his bargains. One of the things which strikes one most on first coming to Russia is the outward signs of devotion of the people; the lower the class, certainly the more devout. There is nothing to beat the Russian moujik in this respect: no matter what his business may be, nor however great his hurry, he will never pass a sacred shrine or image—and

there are sacred shrines or images at the corner of every street—without stopping, bowing, and reverently crossing himself all over. In the large towns you may at any time see the top of an omnibus crowded with a score of men, who at a given moment, as if by word of command, all take off their hats, and begin to cross themselves violently, as if seized by a common epidemic. At the corners of the principal thoroughfares there are invariably found little chapels, like this one at Nijni, consecrated to some popular saint, before whose image the devout burn candles, and men and women will be seen crowding at the threshold, throwing themselves down, and striking their foreheads three times on the ground before it. One gets accustomed to the sight, but for some time you think you are among a nation of *dévots:* I don't think we have any word in English exactly to express this meaning, nor is the type common amongst us. On one side of the chapel a quack dentist has set up with a specific to cure toothache; on the other a quack doctor, with the pretension to cure habitual drunkenness; I think this fellow has a sense of humour, for a friend of mine, attracted to him by curiosity, and wishing at the same time to play a hoax on him, took a friend with him—the soberest man in Russia—and paid him a visit, telling him that he came to consult him for his friend, who was an inveterate tippler; the playful doctor, after looking at him attentively for a minute, shook his head gravely, saying there were some cases which were even beyond the power of his art to cure.

Turning sharply to the left you pass through a street every shop of which is choked with wooden boxes of different sizes and colours, some plain, some plated with brass, evidently an article, as we shall see, in enormous demand at the Yarmark; this leads you to the square which we saw from the top of Mouravieff's tower, situated at the entrance of the "Inner Temple" of the fair, and where the Governor and the Chief of the Police have their temporary residences.

It may interest some of my readers to know that the Governor of Nijni-Novgorod is General Count Koutayssoff, who was for some time Military Attaché at the Russian Embassy in England. There is a covered walk under the Governor's house, where the band plays, and round which Persians and Circassians retail their light and pretty wares: this is the part of the Yarmark sacred to *flaneurs*. Passing through this covered way, you find yourself at once in the "Inner Temple" of the fair; you there pass through half-a-dozen monotonous streets filled with leather, furs, silks, linen, and cotton stuffs, which will probably suffice you; and stimulated by what you have seen from the top of the tower, you will gladly penetrate into the more congenial atmosphere of the "Outer Faubourgs." The "Inner Temple," as I have already hinted, is the only unpicturesque portion of the Yarmark. You see here the hand of authority, the rule and square, the official *ædificetur*. Beyond it, and on every side of it, revels a grand and picturesque disorder; this enchanting chaos seems to have sprung up spontaneously, as a protest against

the ordered kosmos you have left behind, the natural revolt of an artistic and Oriental people against the hand of marshalling authority, whose Dutch-taught conceptions of order it mocks at and defies. It is with a sense of relief, then, that you leave the 12 by 4 by 12 official shops, and disport yourself in the freer air of the faubourgs. Behold here all sorts of wines, brandies and tobacco encircling and coquetting with the dried fruits of the Caucasus: a Tartar mosque flanked by a theatre and dominated by a Christian church; livery-stables, baths, and bales of cotton, as if fallen down promiscuously from heaven; tea, ox-hides, wools, and petroleum, in careless juxtaposition; eating-houses, street-sweepers, and Cossack barracks, surrounding and menacing an Armenian church—all is disorder, all is individual; picturesque accident, and not official design, has presided over the general disarrangement. You forget those streets marshalled like regiments in line with the Governor's house like a flag-staff at the saluting point, and you enjoy the disordered nature of these vast faubourgs, preferring vastly the low mat-houses of the tea-merchants in front of their cubic-shaped tsibecks, to the substantial brick-built houses of the "Inner Temple."

In an island formed by an arm of water running from lake Meshtsherski into the canal surrounding the "Inner Temple" a great horse-fair is annually held during Nijni Yarmark: indeed, Nijni is a famous place for horse fairs; more than one is held there in the course of the year. A really touching sight is to be seen here. When a horse has been singled

out and bought, he has to be cast and forcibly dragged with cords out of the enclosure in which he and his brethren are penned; this is done amidst the loud and forcible protest of the whole herd, who plunge violently about, surrounding the captive prisoner, and neighing in the most piteous manner. The institution of the "Mire" in Russia has evidently penetrated to the brute creation; to be separated from it is their greatest dread. I was struck, in driving through the faubourgs, with the number of traktirs, or eating-houses, of the poorer sort. It is no light matter to supply the daily wants of two-hundred-thousand people. Formerly this was left entirely to private enterprise; but whilst the caterers grew rich the people suffered. Not a year passed without an epidemic breaking out among the throng which attended the fair; this was owing partly to the food, which was notoriously unwholesome, and partly to the air which, in the absence of sanitary arrangements, was pestilential. The Government grappled boldly with this double evil: they built the underground *cloacæ* which I have described; and to meet the evil of unwholesome food, they established, in different parts of the fair, cheap eating-houses for the poorer classes who attended it, where for eight copecks (about twopence three farthings of our money) they can obtain a dinner, consisting of their usual fare, viz., that universal cabbage soup which they call by the unpronounceable name of "shtchi," with meat in it, black bread at discretion, and a favourite grit porridge called "kasche." They can

also obtain for three copecks (about a penny) sufficient tea to give them half-a-dozen cups of that national beverage, and three pieces of sugar. These official eating-houses are a great boon to the poorer classes, not only for the advantages which they offer in themselves, but also as a check upon those set up by private enterprise, both in the way of keeping down their prices, and in keeping up in them a certain standard of excellence, or at any rate of wholesomeness: in this respect they are well appreciated by the class for whose benefit they have been established. At the first threatenings of an epidemic, the private traktirs are deserted, and the people flock to these Government establishments, thus giving a convincing proof of their appreciation of the respective merits of each; the consequence has been that since these measures have been taken no epidemic has broken out at the Nijni Yarmark.

Beside these hygienic and sanitary precautions, the Government has taken energetic means to grapple with another danger. Fairs have long been the chosen ground of fires: the great fair of Nijni-Novgorod itself in a great measure owed its origin to a fire which consumed its predecessor at Makarief; it was itself constantly subject to the ravages of this destructive element. How could it be otherwise? Such masses of inflammatory materials—many of them liable to spontaneous combustion—scattered about in every direction: wood, straw, hay, and petroleum in dangerous juxtaposition; houses, too, made of wood and matting! The wonder was that, once

a fire was kindled in such a place, it ever could be got under. The shipping, too, was equally insecure. I have already described the precautions adopted on the river: those on land were equally effective; the Inner Bazaar, as we have seen, was surrounded by a canal, so that water could be obtained in any quantity almost at every point: it was equally handy for the outer boulevards, which, surrounding the inner bazaar, as it were, hugged the sides of the canal. Numerous little hand-engines, such as are now common in England, were posted at the most inflammatory parts of the fair; and, lastly, three fire-stations were built at different angles, whence, within three minutes of the alarm-bell being rung, swift horses, harnessed to a dozen fire-engines, would be at full gallop for the threatened spot. And to secure the necessary water-pressure, two large cisterns, filled by means of a steam-engine, were placed at the top of the high building which we saw from Mouravieff's tower, away in the direction of the Kunavin suburb. The Government had evidently not done things here by halves. We asked the kind and courteous Chief of the Police, who had accompanied us in our drive through the Yarmark, if he would not order a fire to be kindled among the shipping, in order that we might be able to test with our own eyes the efficiency of his fire-ships: although desirous of obliging us in most ways, he unfortunately did not feel at liberty to comply with this request.

CHAPTER VIII.

NIJNI-NOVGOROD. TEA, SUGAR, AND IRON.

I WILL begin this chapter by observing that any foreigner wishing to see more than the outside shell of this great fair had better come provided with letters of introduction. As a rule, in Russia this is not necessary. Nothing can exceed the courtesy and kind feeling shewn by this amiable nation to all strangers; nevertheless, at such a busy place as is Nijni during the Yarmark, and where so many things lie under the surface, if you wish to see into them a little closely, you may as well arm yourself in the way I have mentioned. Thanks to the kindness of Mr. Michell, the British Consul and Secretary at the Embassy at St. Petersburg, to whom English visitors in Russia are always in so many ways indebted, I was well provided in this respect, and it is to the officials and the merchants to whom I was introduced by them, that I am indebted for most of the facts which I shall now proceed to lay before my readers. I awoke one morning with the rather brilliant idea of attacking the great Yarmark in the flank, and, crossing the Volga in a boat, of carrying by storm one of those tempting-looking tea-merchant's zinofkas which lay as outposts at the northern extremity of the fair. I avoided in this way the Oka's wooden bridge, and

I plunged at once into the most interesting part of the Yarmark.

It used to be said formerly that tea governed the Yarmark, that it decided the price of every other article sold there, and that no bargain could be effected until its price was decided—and, allowing for the exaggeration of all such general statements, this was true. In the first place tea was incomparably the most important article sold there. Every leaf of tea used in this vast Empire was first brought to Nijni from Kiakhta, and any one who has been to Russia knows what this amounts to: tea is the universal national beverage of Russians. The moment a Russian awakes he swallows tea, and every act of daily routine is prefaced by libations of tea. Does a stranger visit him, a tray with tea and slices of lemon is immediately handed to him. In Turkey it is coffee and the tchibouque: in Russia it is tea and the papiros. The coffee-house is in Russia the tea-house, and these establishments are at the corner of every street. There, to the sound of a large organ playing popular tunes, the Russian will sit by the hour, and drink tea by the pail-full. The tea-house is an institution: tea is the great institution; the quantity of it consumed must be appalling. The year before 1856, when the duty on Canton tea was lowered, the amount sold at Nijni was one hundred and sixty thousand tsibecks, the tsibeck containing ninety pounds Russian, or eighty-one pounds English (the Russian pound is nine-tenths the English pound). Before, too, the Canton tea was admitted, that brought from

Kiakhta being limited in amount, the tea supply could not be increased, however great might be the demand; hence great fluctuations in its price. The trade, too, was in the hands of some half-dozen large merchants, between whom an understanding was easily arrived at, and the supply limited and the price kept up. The price which they paid to the Chinese at Maimachen was kept a secret between them, and did not affect the price they demanded at Nijni.

Besides this, the tea-merchants were the largest purchasers of the goods at the fair. They paid for their tea with wools, cloths, and cottons, which they purchased there, and which they sold partly direct to the Chinese, and partly to merchants in Siberia; so that the price which tea cost, the exchange value of tea, as compared with other commodities, did really affect the prices of all the most important merchandise at the fair.

But in 1856 a change came over the fortunes of the Kiakhta tea: in that year Canton tea was admitted into Russian ports at greatly reduced rates, and now it is imported in such quantities that it has almost supplanted its rival, the supply of which has fallen from one hundred and sixty thousand to thirty thousand tsibecks. The duty on Canton tea is heavier than that on the Kiakhta tea, the latter only paying fifteen copecks (about fivepence), whereas the former pays fifty-eight copecks a-pound; but the difference in the cost of transport more than counteracts this advantage. The Canton tea arrives at St. Petersburg in three months: the tea from Kiakhta takes eighteen months in getting to Nijni-Novgorod.

The following is the route which it has to follow:—In the first place, it has six thousand versts to travel in China before it reaches Maimachen, near the Russian frontier. Here the Russian merchants buy it and convey it over the frontier to Kiakhta, where there is a regular trade in packing the tsibecks in strong cowhide coverings, costing three and a-half roubles each, for their further transport. From Kiakhta it is carried by land to Tomsk and Omsk; hence by water (chiefly by the rivers Irtish and Tobol) as far as Tiumen, whence it is transported again by land as far as Perm, and there re-shipped on the Kama, which flows into the Volga a little to the south of Kasan.

The distance thus traversed is eleven thousand five hundred versts, and the amount spent annually in carriage by the tea-merchants was formerly (before 1856) reckoned at three and a-half million roubles. The time occupied by this journey is a-year and a-half; all this time the capital of the tea-merchant is locked up, whereas the Canton tea-merchant turns his capital over three or four times in the course of the year. No wonder then that, in spite of the difference in the rate of duty, Kiakhta cannot compete with Canton, and that the sceptre of the Yarmark has departed from tea. Probably if it were not for an opinion, or prejudice, that sea-transported tea loses some of its flavour, the amount of Kiakhta-imported tea would be even smaller than it is. With reference to this opinion, the following is the current doctrine on the subject at Nijni:—

It is held, not exactly that the sea-voyage injures

the tea, but that the preparation of the tea for the sea voyage, viz. the extra drying and exposure to the air which it has to undergo, in order that it should not be injured by the voyage, does affect its flavour; so that indirectly it comes to the same thing. What undoubtedly does affect the flavour, is the nature of the water which is used in the making; the softest water is the best: the harder water is, the less justice can be done to the best of teas.

The great bulk of the tea at Nijni is black tea; its price, probably in consequence of the competition of the Canton tea, was very low this year, a tsibeck of the very best tea costing a hundred and thirty-five roubles. Little packets of yellow and white teas are sold in pound packets retail, and there is a not inconsiderable sale of an inferior brick tea, called kirpitchni, of which there is a demand for the Kirghes and Kalmucks. When the tea-merchant wishes to shew you a sample of the tea in a tsibeck, he first untacks a part of the cowhide covering, and then, with an iron probe of the size and shape of a poker, with a very sharp point, and an oblong groove scooped out in the middle, he digs into the tsibeck. The covering of the tea cannot resist the home thrust of the probe, which, when it is pulled out again, contains, buried in the groove, a specimen of the tea in the tsibeck. The professional "taster" is not obliged to drink of the tea to know its quality; it suffices for him to roll the dry leaves between his hands, and to bury his nose in them for a minute: he is then able to tell, within five copecks a pound, the value and quality of the tea.

The tea depôt is the most picturesque part of the fair; it would be still more so if the Chinaman with his pigtail could be seen. But there are no Chinamen at Nijni; the tea and the Chinaman part company at Maimachen, and from that point the trade is entirely in the hands of Russians. Nevertheless, the little low mat-houses, called zinofkas, in which the tea-merchant lives, with the piles of cubic tsibecks in front of them, have a pretty and Oriental look about them. The zinofka contains four or five rooms, and has only cost 20*l.* in its construction: it is easily taken down and carried away, like a tent. I felt much less disinclined than usual to accept the cup of exquisitely-flavoured tea which our friend the tea-merchant, who had invited us into his zinofka, offered us before we proceeded on our tour of inspection.

Tea suggested sugar to me, and I strolled into the sugar department. The ordinary Russian does not sweeten his tea by putting sugar into it, but he takes a lump between his teeth, crunches it, and then sips his tea, which he generally flavours with a slice of lemon. What the particular advantage of this method is, unless it is to spoil his teeth, I do not quite know, but it makes him at any rate a connoisseur of sugar. From this cause he prefers the hard cane sugar to the softer article made of beetroot: nevertheless, large quantities of beetroot sugar are sold at Nijni. The Governments of Kharkof, Kief, Podolia, and Tcherkigof are especially famous for their beetroot crop, and besides those at Moscow and St. Petersburg, there was a large sugar refinery at Kief, which was burnt

down last year, but is being rebuilt. Besides these principal ones, there are vast numbers of smaller refineries. A great deal of this sugar goes to Nijni, where it is sold to wholesale merchants, who retail it to the different parts of the Empire. On account of the importance of this trade at Nijni, the fortunes of the beetroot crop in the Ukraine are always followed there with interest. The Moscow and St. Petersburg markets are supplied direct by their own refineries, and not from Nijni; the Nijni sugar goes principally to Orenburg, Perm, Ekaterinenburg, Irkutsk, and Yakutsk—in fact, to Siberia and eastwards. This branch of trade has assumed great development in Russia of late years: at the beginning of this century there were only two sugar refineries in the country; now there are two hundred and sixty-two.

Tea-drinking, I have said, is one of the great institutions in Russia; the outward and visible symbol of this institution is the somovar. There is something almost sacred about the somovar in Russia; I scarcely like to talk about it amongst profane things. It ranks with the gilt images of Greek saints which are found in the corners of every room in Russia, and before which the pious believer is never tired of crossing himself: in the same way, not a household, however poor, in Russia is without a somovar. To make tea in the vulgar fashion of pouring boiling water into the teapot, would be to rob it of all its cheering grace, and to profane the institution. The somovar is essential to the orthodox practice of tea, and as the first word you learn in Russia is "tchai,"

so the first thing which will strike your eye on arriving there is the somovar. The somovar is a large urn made of bronze or brass, with a tube running through the centre, into which charcoal is placed; when the tea hour arrives (and every hour is the tea hour in Russia) the charcoal is lighted, rather should I say, like the sacred fire of the Zoroastrians it is never quenched; there it burns in its brazen tube, and the water boils audibly, and the little china teapot stands simmering at the top of the charcoal—although this last is really a heterodox practice which has crept insensibly into the pure religion of tea—and in this way cup after cup of the Russian nectar is supplied.

On my way to the iron stores on the little sand-island on the Oka, I was determined to look in at the bronze and brass department and see the somovars. I was not surprised to see battalions, regiments, brigades, *corps d'armées* of somovars marshalled before me; every household in Russia with its somovar, and sixty millions of Russians! Here be elements for a roaring trade! Besides, I hear that the somovar epidemic has penetrated into the far East; and that this *avant-courier* of Russian civilization was seen by the enterprising Vambéry at Khiva and at Bokhara. In the year 1867 there were forty-one manufacturers of somovars in the town of Toula, and the number of people engaged in this industry was over three thousand. Six thousand dozens go to Nijni annually, and are there sold wholesale: they are made of all sizes, and are packed in cases containing a dozen

each; their average cost is ninety roubles a dozen. The Moscow market is supplied direct from Toula.

Another interesting article of Toula manufacture—Toula, situated on the river Upa, is the Birmingham of Russia, where sixty thousand guns are annually turned out—consists in the large church-bells which adorn the belfries of all Greek churches: these are sometimes very sweet-sounding. As is well known, the Greek Church does not admit instrumental music in its services; it seems to me that the beauty of its bells is the unconscious compensation they allow themselves for this privation. One of the most agreeable impressions which remain to me of my visit to Moscow, was listening to the chimes of all the bells of its numberless churches on a lovely evening from the Sparrow Hills in the neighbourhood. Some of them are of a very fine, deep tone, and when they are the subject of purchase at the Yarmark, they are each tried in their turn, like pianos at a piano manufactory. They are made at Yaroslaf and Viatka, as well as at Toula.

Another curious, though less-important article of manufacture, is the little bronze cross made at Kief, and supposed by the faithful to be of peculiar spiritual efficacy in the hour of death. There is something peculiarly appropriate in the fact of these little crosses being manufactured at Kief, Kief the sacred city, the Canterbury of Russia. Connected with the same class of ideas are the images of Greek saints, to which I have already referred as invariably found in the corners of all rooms in Russia. They are in a great

measure manufactured at a place called Sousdal, in Vladimir, by a class of people called Ofeni, who use an esoteric language in their trade, supposed to have come from Constantinople with their ancestors who first introduced these images into Russia. Not that they have a monopoly of the manufacture; it was too good a trade to escape the attention of the colonists at Sarepta, and these liberal Lutherans supply them in large quantities to their orthodox neighbours. When I remember that most of the African idols are manufactured at Birmingham, I confess I have no sarcasms in store for the German industrial. I hope I need not say that I do not for a moment wish to compare a Greek saint with an African idol. Perhaps the most remarkable thing connected with the images of Greek saints is that they are the only objects in Russia which are not made the subject of bargaining. Everything else is made the subject of long diplomatic negotiations before you can come to any practical result: it is the custom of the country, and considerably hampers business; but it is impiety to make a Greek saint the subject of huckstering. I must add, that it is considered equally impious (which it certainly is not in anything else) to ask an extravagant and unreasonable price for it. These images have only the head and hands painted; the rest of the body is covered over with thin plates of brass, the whole inclosed in a wooden frame; in the churches they are often brilliantly set with diamonds and precious stones, the offerings of the devout. The sight of these is sometimes too much for the cupidity of the

wicked, and on more than one occasion people have been taken up for trying to wrench these stones out of their settings with their teeth, whilst apparently devoutly embracing the image of the saint: the sacristans and deacons of the church have generally a sharp eye on them.

But we have now reached the bridge over the arm of the Oka, which encircles the island which contains all the iron from the Oural mountains. Without saying that iron governs the Yarmark, it is at least true to say that iron has dethroned tea in its relative importance at Nijni. Whatever, too, may be the changes and vicissitudes in store for Nijni, it will probably remain the great depôt for Siberian iron. Its position with reference to the river system of Russia will doubtless secure for it, permanently, this advantage. The railways, of which we hear so much, as destined to revolutionise the trade of Nijni, will not at any rate affect it in the matter of iron. The difference in cost for the conveyance of heavy goods by water, as compared with the cheapest rates of railway freight, is 1 : 5 : indeed, the danger to Nijni in this respect comes from the river and not from the rail. Yaroslaf threatens Nijni as a depôt, for that portion of the Siberian iron which goes to Moscow, just because the iron can travel as far as Yaroslaf by water, and from Yaroslaf to Moscow the distance is only 250 versts by rail as compared with 410 from Nijni to Moscow. Six million poods (about 3 1-10th poods are 1 cwt.) of iron of the value of eight-and-a-half millions of roubles are annually brought to Nijni: it

The Fair, and the Island on the Oka covered with Oural Iron; "part of the Inner Bazaar" on the right-hand side, with the Governor's House in the Centre facing the Oka.

comes from the neighbourhood of Perm, brought down by the rivers Tschousowaya and Bielaya (which run into the Kama), by means of boats, specially built for this purpose, called kolomenkas. The chief mining districts are Nijni Tajilsk, Wotkinskü, and Tjewskü; Demidof, and Yarkowlew are the great iron proprietors in these parts. The price of iron fluctuates a great deal—from 1 rouble 10 copecks to 2 roubles 80 copecks a pood. The chief reason of this is that the trade is in the hands of a very few merchants, who are able, by buying up all the iron from Demidof and Yarkowlew, to rig the market at their pleasure. The custom of the trade, which requires half the price to be paid down at the purchase (the rest at twelve months' credit), tends to keep the trade in the hands of a small number of merchants with sufficient capital for it. In 1866, two merchants, Roukawischnikow and Pastoukhow, bought up all the iron at Nijni, and sold it at a profit of 20 per cent. higher than its normal price. The Swedish and English iron, however, which are imported in considerable quantities to St. Petersburg, compete with and tend to keep down the price of the Oural iron. This latter, however, is considered to be of a superior quality; its reputed greater malleability is an important element in its value, especially in bridge-making and other engineering operations. At Riga, too, the Oural iron meets the English and Swedish iron, and, from the length of time it takes in reaching Riga, is being driven out of the market by them. At Kief, too, another great centre of the iron trade, the foreign iron imported through

Odessa is, in spite of its inferior quality, driving out the Oural iron. It has many advantages over this latter. In the first place, the carriage from Odessa up the Dnieper is far easier than that from Nijni: this latter route is first to Kalouga by the Oka, then overland to Breanska, then by the rivers Desna and Dnieper to Kief, where goods from Nijni only arrive the following year; in the next place, the Odessa corn-ships can afford to carry the iron at the cheapest possible rate, as an alternative to returning to Odessa in ballast.

An English company has lately been started to work the rich mines (iron, copper, coal, &c.) which have been found in the neighbourhood of Akmolli and Karkarali, on the river Tobol. In connection with this great enterprise, and with the Siberian trade generally, it is proposed to join Ekaterinburg either with the river Tobol direct, or with the town of Tiumen, on the Tara, which runs into the Tobol. The railway interests in Russia are almost as antagonistic and pugnacious as they are in England. It is proposed, further, to join Ekaterinburg with the general railway system of the Empire; but two strong interests here interpose, and contend for different routes. The St. Petersburg and Moscow interests desire the new line to pass through Perm, Viatka, Kostroma, and Yaroslaf, whence there would be one line branching to St. Petersburg, and another to Moscow. The Nijni-Novgorod interests, on the other hand, desire it to take a more southerly course, through Krasno Ufimsk on the Oufa and Saraful on the Kama, to Kasan, thus

connecting Siberia direct with Nijni-Novgorod. Both are powerful interests, and it is not yet certain which will carry the day. There is no House of Commons' Committee to decide between them.

Whilst I am talking of lines of railway, a most important subject in a country so vast as Russia, and one bearing directly on the commercial prospects of Nijni-Novgorod, I may as well mention two new lines which are in course of construction, and which will be completed in three years' time: one is from Orenburg to Samara, and involves an immense undertaking, in the way of an iron bridge over the Volga at the latter place. Orenburg, it will be remembered, is on the direct route for Kasala on the Sir Daria, and the troops for Khiva and Independent Tartary, as well as the cotton from Khiva and Bokhara, pass through it. Russia will, when this route is completed, have taken another important step eastwards, and done much in the way of linking together its scattered provinces, and concentrating its gigantic strength. The other line, which will be completed at the same time, is from Samara, through Sizran and Penza to Tambov, where it enters into the general railway system of the Empire: a small portion of this line—that between Sizran and Penza—will be opened in about a month's time. I repeat what I said in the first chapter: the Russia of to-day is very far from being the Russia of the Crimean war.

CHAPTER IX.

COTTON, LINEN, SILKS, AND WOOLLEN GOODS.

IN a line with the stores of Kiakhta tea, and equally close to the Siberian wharf, you meet with huge bales of raw cotton strewn for half a verst along your road. You are struck with the loose, slack appearance of these bales; they are unlike the tight-compressed, well-stuffed sacks which you have seen unloading on the wharves at Liverpool: the reason for this is, that the bales before you have traversed steppe and desert, and have been purposely so packed to fit comfortably the backs of the patient camels which have carried them from Tashkend, Khiva, and Bokhara, as far as Orenburg. One camel is found capable of carrying exactly two bales of between eight and nine poods weight (the pood is forty pounds Russian or thirty-six pounds English) each. From Orenburg they are conveyed to Samara in carts drawn by oxen, which, in long trains, are seen crossing the steppes in this direction. At Samara they are shipped on the Volga for Nijni-Novgorod. Another route sometimes followed, instead of Orenburg and Samara, is the more northern one of Troitsk and Kasan. As is well known, the Tashkend and Khiva cotton is not of so fine a quality as the American; it is shorter in fibre, and not so clean. With reference to this last point, it seems impossible to eradicate from the minds of Orientals the

idea that it is for their interest to mix dirt and rubbish with the cotton, so as to increase its weight: it is a common practice with them to wet the cotton with the same object, and although the custom of the trade allows a deduction of twenty per cent. on the discovery of the fraud, the fine by no means checks the practice. What, however, keeps up the trade in this Asiatic cotton is the difference in price, notwithstanding the distances it has to travel, between it and the American cotton: its average price is seven roubles a pood — about two roubles a pood cheaper than the American: at the same time, its price is always checked by the American prices, for it is only worth a manufacturer's while to buy an inferior article as long as there exists a certain fixed disproportion between its price and that of the superior article; the moment this limit is encroached upon, he will cease to buy the inferior article. An illustration of this took place a short time ago. Daily telegrams with the prices all over the world are hung up on the walls of the Bourse. The price of American cotton had fallen: immediately all the Tashkend and Khiva cotton at the Yarmark fell half-a-rouble per pood in price. This sympathetic sensitiveness of the market is shewn in almost every kind of produce: it is the touch of wire which makes all wares kin. The Kiakhta teas are influenced in the same way by the prices telegraphed from St. Petersburg of the imports from Canton. Persian and Bokharian silks rise and fall with the prices of Greek and Italian threads. Oural iron keeps its eyes on the English and Swedish metal, and com-

ports itself in accordance with the movements of the latter. Even Toula needles watch jealously their little English and Prussian rivals, and regulate their own price on a scale dictated by them.

During the American war Khiva and Tashkend had it all their own way: it was the hey-day of Khivan trade. Raw cotton, which before the war was four, five, and six roubles a pood, rose in 1862 to twelve and thirteen roubles, and in 1864 to twenty-two and twenty-three roubles a pood! At the conclusion of the war it immediately fell to eight roubles; but when it was discovered that the stock in hand in the Southern States was limited to three millions of bales, it immediately rose again. It seems remarkable that these bales can travel by land over the enormous distances of steppe and desert, and yet so completely beat the American cotton in price. The price calculated for the conveyance of a camel load (two bales) from Khiva to Orenburg is fourteen roubles (seven roubles a bale); from Tashkend to Orenburg 10½ roubles (5¼ a bale). From Orenburg to Samara the cost varies with the price of labour and of cattle; the minimum price is twenty copecks a pood, that is, one rouble eighty copecks a bale. Besides the expense and difficulty of conveyance, and let me add, the risk incurred from the wild Kirghes on the route, the exchange at Khiva and Bokhara is very difficult.

The natives have a poor opinion of Russian money, and an exaggerated opinion of the value of their own. As an instance, the exchange for a "tinga," a little silver coin at Khiva of about the size of a sixpence,

carries in Khiva the value of twenty-eight copecks; in Russia its value is exactly eighteen copecks: the consequence of this is, that commercial transactions have to be effected with these Asiatics in a great measure by barter. The articles in demand among them are cheap cotton prints, coarse red and black cloth, some wood and iron wares, leather, and gold embroidery. Formerly this trade was entirely in the hands of the buyers of raw cotton; but recently, in consequence of the increased security of the caravans along the deserts, the markets have been glutted with Russian goods, and the exchange has consequently been very unfavourable to Russia, and the cost of cotton has risen. Were it not for this, the increase of Russian power in Independent Tartary, the civilizing influences and the improved methods of cultivation which may be expected to follow in its wake, would probably have the effect of lowering the price of the cotton, as it doubtless will have of improving its quality. At present, things are in a state of transition, and during the war with Khiva the Kirghes on the frontier shewed some signs of turbulence, in sympathy with their co-religionists.

From Bokhara, besides coarse wolf- and sheep-skins, there comes a valuable produce of lamb's-wool, which goes by the name generally, in the market, of Astrakhan wool. There are different qualities of this article; the best sorts are called *karakul*, the next *karakcultsch*, and after that *bagan* and *karatschanx*. From the consideration of raw cotton, we are naturally led to that of the cotton fabrics of Russia. The whole

of that central portion of Russia which may be said, roughly, to be included between the Volga on the north and the Oka on the south, is the manufacturing district of the country: as it is wood, and not coal which is burnt, it cannot be called its "black country." North of this line are the enormous forests of Russia, supplying fuel to this district: south of the Oka the strictly agricultural provinces of Russia begin: between these two the poor character of the land, the numbers of the population, and the proximity to the northern forests, connected with it by numerous rivers, have determined the manufacturing industry of its inhabitants. Moscow, Vladimir, Yaroslaf, and Kostroma represent the cotton interest of Russia; it is one of the most important interests in Russia, and also of the Nijni Yarmark. One hundred and twenty millions of roubles' worth of goods are annually produced, and the Eastern trade of the country is intimately connected with it. In Moscow the best qualities are manufactured: at Tekovo, Lejnovo, Ivanovo, and Chinja (in Vladimir) the coarser sorts. Nijni fair is the thermometer of the prosperity of these districts. If there is a great demand for cotton goods at Nijni, there is plenty in the manufacturing country throughout the year; if, on the contrary, the market at Nijni is flat, then there is distress in those districts. In the uncertainty of the market the merchants are afraid of buying-up too great supplies, and the manufacturers of over-producing; the consequence is, that the practice has grown up of only sending a limited quantity of goods

to the Yarmark, and supplementing these with samples; then, when orders are given at the beginning of the fair, of setting all the looms to work, for delivery of the goods before its termination. It was probably this increasing practice which was one of the chief causes for prolonging the duration of the fair, as was done a few years ago, from the beginning to the middle of September (Russian style). The Russian fabrics, if it were not for the strictly protective tariff, could not, confessedly, compete with those of England either in quality or price. Indeed, even as it is, it is only the coarser kinds of their goods which monopolise their own markets: for these the demand is very great, both for the poorer classes of Russians and also for the Siberian and Asiatic markets. One of the articles most in demand among these latter is a cheap bright-coloured handkerchief, which the Tartars call *joulok*, and which their women wear over their heads. They cost a rouble and a-half a dozen. It is a common practice in the Russian fabrics to mix American cotton with that of Khiva and Tashkend as a basis or framework in the texture, just as the superior Italian silk is mixed with the inferior thread obtained from Bokhara.

Not far from Moscow, on the road between Troitsi Sergi and Alexandrofski, there are large cotton manufactories where the red calicoes so much exported to Khiva and Tartary are largely fabricated. These belong to the well-known firm Baranoff and Souboff (*Anglicè*, Messrs. Mutton, Teeth, and Co.!), who had so

84518

much to say to the Government's interference at Khiva. The marina root, madder, grown in the Caucasus, and used as a red dye in the cotton manufacture, used formerly to flourish with the cotton; lately, however, it has been supplanted by aniline, made from the refuse of coal, and imported, as there is no coal in Russia, through St. Petersburg: it is supposed to give a more brilliant colour, and is cheaper than the marina, but it is also said to be less lasting—in fact, not "to wash," so that it is expected there will shortly be a re-action in favour of marina, which for the present, at any rate, remains unsaleable in the Caucasian storehouses. One year (1866) a merchant, Malutin by name, bought up the whole of the marina crop at Derbent for 5½ roubles a pood, and was able to sell it at the Yarmark for fifteen and sixteen roubles a pood. However, the next year everybody "went in" for the cultivation of marina; the market was glutted with it, and the price proportionately depressed.

The immense demand for cheap cotton goods in Siberia and in Asia, coupled with the protective tariff, makes the cotton manufacture a flourishing business in Russia. This is not quite the case with the linen trade: formerly, what linen was worn in Russia (except by those who could afford the foreign article) was worked at home and called *pesträdʹ:* and it is still the practice for merchants to send round the country districts, and to buy from the peasants the linen worked by them at home at as preposterously low rates as two and three copecks an arshine (the arshine is twenty-eight inches).

There are two million arshines of this coarser linen (valued at a hundred and thirty-five thousand roubles) brought every year to Nijni; half a million arshines of the best quality (valued at fifty thousand roubles), and a hundred and fifty thousand roubles' worth of the middle sorts.

Linen and cotton compete with each other at Nijni. When cotton is dear, linen is in demand; when cotton is cheap, linen is neglected; during the American war the manufacture of linen flourished. Vladimir, Yaroslaf, and Kostroma are the chief centres for the manufacture of linen. At Viatka the coarser kinds are made. A quarter of their joint production goes to Nijni; the rest direct to Moscow and St. Petersburg. There is a great market for the sale of linen at the fair of Rostof which takes place during the first three weeks of Lent. The linen is there bought up by middle-men (*maiaki*), and sent to Nijni-Novgorod. The associative village system—so peculiarly Sclavonic, and which for town industries corresponds with the "mire" of the country districts—is seen in operation in the government of Yaroslaf, where a whole village, of seven hundred cottages, is engaged in the making of linen; indeed, this is the primitive Russian form of industry; it replaces (what is unknown in Russia) the German institution of guilds. We may see elsewhere, as in the government of Tver, a whole town (Kimr) engaged in boot-making, a million and a-half roubles' worth of boots being annually turned out by them. Under such a system it is clear that the workmen are likely to

be entirely in the hands of middle-men, who can extract the product of their labour for almost any price they choose. Moreover, under such a *régime*, fairs are the only means by which the material wants of the population can be adequately supplied; and this is one of the chief causes why fairs have always flourished in Russia.

There are several reasons for Russian linen being inferior to the foreign; in the first place, the Russian peasant is eminently conservative in his modes of agriculture. The Tschouvash custom, which I referred to in a former chapter, of abstaining from cutting the hay till Elias' day, is only a slightly exaggerated form of the spirit which governs the cultivation of the soil in Russia. The flax crop suffers from this spirit. The peasant who is in the habit on fast-days, which are very numerous in Russia, of mixing a vegetable oil (animal oil being, of course, prohibited), made from the grain of the flax, with his grit-porridge (*kascha*), persists in cultivating the grain of the flax at the expense of the stem, which for purposes of linen manufacture ought properly to be cut before the grain is full. Nothing will put out of his head that the bigger the flax the better; the consequence, of course, of this is, that the linen suffers in the first instance in the inferior quality of its raw material; in the next place, it is almost impossible to introduce new and improved methods of fabrication among the peasant families, who are to so great an extent the makers of linen in Russia. Among other prejudices, they persist in the use of

calcium, which everywhere else has been superseded for the cleansing processes by chlorium: for these several reasons the linen manufacture has remained in Russia in the condition it was in the time of Peter the Great, who first started it; indeed, it has actually gone back; for in his time Russia began to export linen in the Baltic, which she has long ceased to do. A protective tariff saves the trade from the penalty, and at the same time the remedy, for this state of things.

Vladimir and Moscow are the centres, also, for the manufacture of silk: in Moscow alone there are two thousand workmen engaged in it. A considerable trade is done in silk embroidery for the robes of priests (*partschi*). The price of the Persian and Bokharian silk is in a great measure checked by the price of the superior article from Greece, France, and especially Italy. Two Russians, Alexeeff and Woronim, have even manufactories in Italy. Gratscheff is the name of the largest Moscow silk merchant; it is he who buys up all the raw silk from the Caucasus and Persia.

As it is the coarser kinds of cotton and of linen, and we may add silk, which form the staple of the Russian trade in these articles, so it is the coarser kinds of cloth which form the staple of the cloth trade in Russia; of these there is an enormous demand for her vast army, for the peasants, and for export to Siberia, Tartary, and to China. This, however, does not exclude the manufacture of the finer sorts of woollen stuffs from the fine fleeces of the Ukraine sheep. The

enormous heaps of hides scattered on the Siberian Wharf at the fair attest the importance of the woollen trade in Russia: you will see lying there the fine Ukraine fleeces, but not in large quantities, for the chief part of these is sent direct to Moscow; from Samara, Simbirsk, and Orenburg the fleeces of the sheep which have been melted down for their fat; and from Troitsk and Ouralsk the coarse fleeces of Kirghes sheep: all these fleeces are sent to Nijni washed; for, until they undergo this process, it is impossible to put a price upon them. Twelve out of forty of the Kirghes fleeces is the proportion which has invariably to be rejected: you will see here, too, camels' hides and cow hides for the felt boots and leggings, so much used in Russia. From "Little Russia" and "New Russia," especially Kharkof, Ekaterinoslaf, Poltava, Bessarabia, Tauris, and Kherson, the finest wool—the famous Ukraine wool—comes; it is bought up to the value of four millions of roubles, of which, however, only sixty thousand roubles' worth goes to Nijni; the rest is bought at the Ukraine fairs (of which there are eleven), especially at the famous Tliinski (in Poltava) and Uspenski (in Kharkof) fairs, and taken direct to Moscow. In the Crimea a famous wool, *merlouschka*, called in the foreign market Astrakhan cashmere, is produced; in Riga and Warsaw the cloth manufactories have a reputation. The Government of Grodno has twenty-two manufactories at Bialostock: Tchernigof has twelve manufactories; its cloth goes to Moscow, and is thence despatched straight to China in exchange for that portion of the tea which

comes direct to Moscow without stopping at Nijni-Novgorod. We have seen in several instances how the large Moscow trade is gradually throwing off all dependence on Nijni: it manufactures its own silk and cotton; it gets its linen direct from Yaroslaf and Vladimir; its cloth from Tchernigof, in the Ukraine, and its tea from China; its iron has a "growing inclination" to avoid Nijni and to pass through Yaroslaf; and it supports, with all the weight of its powerful interests, the construction of a line of railway, which, if decided on, would go some way to dethrone Nijni in favour of Yaroslaf as a great central commercial depôt, especially in respect to the Siberian trade.

On my way home from the fair, I was again struck with what I had often remarked before, viz., the profusion of water-melons and cucumbers, which were being everywhere offered for sale; pyramids of melons and water-melons, like cannon-balls in an arsenal, were heaped up in every direction, and as for cucumbers, you couldn't help fancying that a plague of cucumbers, like locusts, had descended upon the earth; all along the Volga, from Astrakhan to Nijni, the whole population seemed engaged in eating water-melons; their price being three copecks, equivalent to one penny, put them within the reach of even the moderately wealthy. At every wood station that we stopped at, the water-melon and its rival the sunflower were the subjects of a lively traffic. Saratof seemed to be the head-quarters of this latter fruit, but he had outposts all along the line. But if the water-melon and the

sunflower are luxuries and pastimes, the cucumber is a law and a necessity: you never see a Russian peasant at dinner, but you see the lump of black bread and the cucumber. A moujick's dinner may be said to consist of x plus cucumber; the x will consist of his favourite cabbage-soup (*schtchi*), with or without meat in it, and sometimes in addition to it the equally famous grit-porridge (*kascha*); sometimes the *kascha* is without the *schtchi*, and sometimes the *schtchi* is without the *kascha*; but whether in separation or combination, the cucumber, at least, is always there; and should x equal zero, as I am afraid it sometimes does, then the ever-faithful cucumber does duty for all the rest. Cucumber seems certainly a singular dish to be so national in a country with a climate like Russia's; it is the last that one would select *à priori* for the post; but this is only one of a great many singularities one meets with. The cucumber costs the thirtieth part of a penny about the Volga; perhaps this fact will help to explain the anomaly.

CHAPTER X.

PERSIAN AND CAUCASIAN GOODS, WOOD AND FURS.

IN the same way that I was deceived in my expectations of finding Chinamen with the tea from China, so was I equally disappointed yesterday in finding the raw-cotton trade entirely in the hands of Russians. I had hoped to see some of that race of Uzbeck Turks, once so redoubtable in the world's history, but now reduced by General Kaufmann's Cossacks to a state of obedient subjection. But there were no more "Independent Tartars" with the cotton from Khiva, than there were Chinamen with the tea from Maimachen. My predilection, however, for Orientals was in some measure gratified in the Persian and Caucasian departments, though the highly civilized features of these specimens of the Uranian family of mankind bear no resemblance to those of their Turanian neighbours. With much courtesy they invited us to inspect their wares: these consisted of packets of silk thread, some Persian carpets, a few foxskins, some marina roots lying in neglected sacks, but principally of barrels upon barrels of dried fruits of every description. There were also, in large quantities, jars containing oils from Baku to compete at the Yarmark with the petroleum from America. Little skins, too, of a wine called Kokhetinskoe attracted one's attention; the wine, although it was

rather agreeable to the taste, with a flavour of Burgundy, interested one less than the little skins in which it was contained; these looked like little sucking-pigs lying on their backs, with their four paws stretched out: the slightest motion communicated to the liquid inside gave them that quivering, palpitating movement, which kept up the delusion of life. It was not, however, a little pig-skin (we are dealing with Mohammedans), but a little goat-skin, and a goat-skin turned inside out, that had taken our fancy. The hairy part, turned inside, is cleansed and smeared over with a grease which preserves its integrity, and is supposed also to improve the flavour of the wine: the skins are tapped at one of the paws.

The Persian merchants buy at Nijni, cotton prints, cloth, copper, steel, leather, and wooden boxes. Russian trade, however, finds it an uphill game to contend with English goods in the Persian market, so that in point of fact it is practically in so-called Independent Tartary and away eastward in China that Russia finds, in Asia, a market for her wares. We see here one important reason for the political encroachments of her government in the direction of these countries; it is only where she can rule the Custom-house, and manipulate the tariff, that her inferior fabrics can hold their own against the superior and cheaper wares from England. Give English commerce anything like a fair chance, handicap it not only too heavily, and it will hold its own in any market of the world, be the form of government what you please. But

Russian commerce is made of other stuff, and far weaklier fibre: it can only thrive within the protected orbit of its Cossack lines.

Close to the Persian stores there is a Persian cuisine, where the Persian merchants dine. I don't know whether the Persians ever eat anything besides chicken and rice: but at any rate, there were there being prepared for them dish after dish of chicken and rice, relieved by rice and chicken, and chicken and rice again.

In my first drive through the fair, on emerging from the wooden bridge over the Oka, the first wares I saw were wooden trunks, in such numbers that they literally filled one whole street; they were of all sizes, prices and degrees of ornamentation; some were as large as chests of drawers, others as small as tiny work-boxes; they form a very important staple of trade at the Yarmark. The enormous forests, which I have described as covering the whole northern superficies of the country, provide the Russians with an exhaustless material for woodcraft. Her people have profited by their opportunities: in whatever other industries they may be behindhand, in every art connected with wood they are *facile principes*. Every Russian peasant is a carpenter, joiner, and architect; his costume is thoroughly incomplete without a hatchet at his girdle; with this simple instrument, put him into a primeval forest, and he will very soon have cleared himself a space, built himself a pretty wooden cottage, and surrounded it with a tasteful wooden fence. The

backwoodsman of Canada is not more enterprising, and his hand is not half so cunning as that of the Russian peasant. What coal is to Great Britain, the forest is to Russia: it is the spring of her industry; her looms and forges are fed by it; the prosperity of her most thickly populated districts is entirely dependent on it; it pours wealth, in the shape of turpentine, charcoal, potassium, tar, and resin, in rich profusion into her lap; and it has taught her one form of industry at any rate, which she can truly call national.

The timber trade in Russia is prodigious. The facilities afforded her, by the configuration of the country and her intricate river system, for the transport southward of the timber she fells in her northern forests, are immense. There is a little place, at the junction of the river Wetlugua with the Volga (on the confines of the governments of Kasan and Nijni-Novgorod), called Kosmodemiansk, which is a kind of depôt centre for the wood trade. A number of little rivers flow through a densely-wooded country in Kostroma, into the Wetlugua. In the month of December, the proprietors of these woods hire as many hands as they can procure, (at the rate of about twenty-five roubles a man for the winter,) and begin to thin (if, indeed, they can be said to thin) their plantations. In the spring, when the little rivulets which intersect the woods are swollen, the trunks of the felled trees are loosely bound together and floated down to the Wetlugua, and so to Kosmodemiansk; here they are more carefully bound together in rafts (*ploti*), by workmen called

"plotnike," who make this a special industry; and in this way they are floated down to the large towns on the Volga, to Simbirsk, Samara, and Saratof, at which last place there is a considerable demand for timber among the "colonists," and as far as Astrakhan. Besides these rafts, you will constantly see on the Volga huge roughly-constructed vessels, on board of which everything wooden, from chairs to houses (literally) ready made, are conveyed down the river for sale. And those large unpainted corn-ships called *bellana*, floating rather than sailing the corn down to Astrakhan, are never destined to re-ascend the river; if they do not founder, they will on arrival at their southern port be cut up and sold. Such wealth of timber floats down the Volga!

Viatka, Kostroma, and Nijni-Novgorod, are the principal governments (provinces) for the manufacture of articles in wood. In this industry—as we have already seen in those of linen-making, boot-making, and so many others—whole villages are exclusively engaged. In Semenoff, in the government of Nijni-Novgorod, every one is engaged in making wooden cups, wooden bowls and basins, wooden spoons, shafts, and that thoroughly Russian institution the "dougua." The dougua is a single piece of bent wood, in the form of a semicircle, fixed at the extremities of the shafts, and covering the heads of the shaft-horses; not a shaft-horse in Russia without a dougua. When you post in a troika (a carriage with the shaft-horse in the middle, and a horse on either side of him harnessed to a bar, and galloping whilst the shaft-horse trots),

a bell or rather bells are fixed to the top of the dougua, which tingle merrily, and announce your approach at long distances. Cups, and bowls, and boxes, are also fabricated in Viatka. Vladimir, Makarief, and Tagil in Siberia, are the chief places for the construction of the trunks which you see in such quantities at the Nijni Yarmark. They are generally sold in lots of six, and vary in price from four roubles a lot to seventy-five roubles each, and the sale is greater every year; they have a particular look about them, which prevents your confounding them with trunks made elsewhere; they are painted various colours, and are often plated with brass, and have a decidedly Oriental and fantastic look about them: not a household in Russia where you do not see them. My readers will perhaps remember seeing them in the tents of the nomad Kirghes, and in Asia you will see them as far as Candahar, Cabul, and Herat; indeed, Asia is the chief market for them. They are great favourites with the Caucasians and Persians; whatever they buy at the Yarmark, and they come there to buy as well as to sell, they pack in these Nijni trunks, and this is one of the causes of the enormous demand for these boxes, at the fair; they do duty for packing-cases, and thus serve the double purpose of "emballage" for the nonce, and desirable objects of permanent possession.

I had promised myself a treat in visiting the great fur establishments at Nijni, and I reserved this as a *bonne bouche* for the end. Sorokoumoff's I was told was the largest, and there accordingly I went. It

is a curious sensation walking through these long galleries, where miles of bear-skins, wolf-skins, fox-skins, beaver-skins, and every other kind of beasts' skins, hang up on the walls along your passage. I suppose different kinds of people will have different kinds of sensation on such an occasion. The sportsman will probably wish that he had had a hand in the slaughter; the philosopher will reflect on man as the cunningest of God's creatures, who can trap the wily fox, and track the panther to his lair. My thoughts I confess, were entirely reflex. I remembered my little droshky-horse shying with an air of intense disgust at the horse-hides which were lying near the Siberian wharf, and I thought what would my sensations at Sorokooumoff's have been if I had been a bear! for it was bear-skins and racoon-skins which in thickest profusion adorned his walls. The more valuable skins and furs lay carefully packed in drawers. An average racoon-skin coat costs about seventy roubles, the best four hundred, and even more.

A good many of the furs come from London: this is the case with most of the American furs. There are two great sales of American furs which take place in London, at Messrs. Lampson's and the Hudson's Bay Company, in the months of March and September: here the Russian merchants buy them, and send them to Moscow to be re-sorted and softened, for in these two arts the Russians are superior to us: they match the different skins with each other better, and they have a particular method of softening them, in which they are very successful. With reference

to Siberian furs, the principal place where the Russian merchants purchase their furs in the first place is at the fair of Yakoutsk on the river Lena. These are taken to other fairs, of which that at Irbit, situated between Tobolsk and Perm, is the principal: here they are bought either for the Moscow market, or for that of the fair at Nijni-Novgorod.

I was very desirous of seeing the famous blue and silver fox-skins: of these Sorokooumoff had some very beautiful specimens.

Foxes are classed in the order of merit (or I should rather say demerit, for the last are the most valuable), as follows:—1. The Caucasian grey fox, which generally undergoes the process of being dyed red; 2. The white fox; 3. The red fox; 4. The cross fox, so-called from having a dark cross on his back; 5. The blue fox; and 6. The silver fox. This last, so-called from white silvery hairs sprinkled in his coat, is the rarest and most expensive of his tribe. I am not sure, as a matter of individual taste, that I prefer him to the blue fox, who comes next to him in rarity and value.

The skins are divided and assorted into three parts, the back, the throat, and the belly. In making up a particular rug, cloak, or muff, these different parts are never mixed: back goes with back, throat with throat, and belly with belly. Except in the case of the blue fox, where the back is considered of superior beauty, it is the belly which is the most valuable portion. A single perfect belly of the silver fox will fetch as high as fifty or sixty roubles!

Another interesting family is what may be called the weasel family. These are classed in the order of merit (not demerit this time), in the following manner:—1. The sable, for which almost any price will be given for the best specimens and colours; 2. The marten; 3. The weasel; 4. The ermine, who seems to have gone out of fashion in a great measure.

The fish otter, too, is in some repute: they are favourites with the Cossacks, who buy them for their wives to trim their dresses with.

The musquash comes in enormous quantities from Hudson's Bay, and is chiefly used for boas and collars. Three millions of them are annually imported; but of this number only fifty thousand are black in colour, and these, which come exclusively from Russian Siberia, are worth double the red. A coat made of the latter costs from thirty-five to seventy roubles; of the black musquash from seventy to one hundred and upwards. Some are black-and-white, and these are made up into muffs, the white part in the centre, and black all round; they are not very pretty, but are in considerable demand.

I ought not to omit, whilst I am on the subject of skins, the reindeer-skins. These come from the northern governments of Vologda and Archangel. They are of three degrees of merit and value:—1. Those called *pijick*, skins of reindeer, one month old; 2. Those called *neblin*, up to nine months old; 3. Those called *oleni*, above nine months, and of course the least valuable.

I saw here, too, the famous Siberian duck called

gargara, which is now a good deal in fashion on the Continent for ladies' hats, muffs, and dress-trimmings. Alas! poor *gargara*, what a thing it is to be in fashion! In vain you tried to hide in Siberian mere those smooth and shining plumes of yours from the vanity of woman!

CHAPTER XI.

THE AMUSEMENTS OF THE FAIR.

ONE thing at Nijni had particularly struck me: you see merchandise in abundance, miles and miles of the produce of two continents lavishly laid out and strewn before your eyes: the feast is ready, but apparently there are no guests: you never see a purchaser. If it were not for the carts heavily laden with goods, which you constantly see coming *from* the fair, you would imagine that there was everything there but purchase and sale; the fact is, that the bargains are not made in open market; it is *la grande guerre*, wholesale business which is carried on, and no petty huckstering meets the eye. Go into that modest-looking little zinofka, and see those two shrewd-looking men talking confidentially to each other, and you will find that "business" to the value of many hundred thousands of roubles has been discussed between them over those glasses of excellent Kiakhta tea: go into the Exchange between twelve and one, or between seven and eight, and you will again see "business" done for millions of roubles in every conceivable article of demand: go into the Commercial Club at any hour, and especially at dinner hour, and you will see that agent of Demidof quietly seated with that Toula manufacturer, who is giving him orders for millions of poods of Oural iron: go still more into the restaurants and cafés, which abound, and you will see grave-looking

men, of every complexion and costume imaginable, from the old Muscovite with his rubicund nose and thick beard, to the Parsee from Baku, seated hours together in pairs, and drinking glass after glass of tea (tea, always tea!), whilst they are trying to strike a bargain, in which each is endeavouring to outwit the other: few words pass between them, but these, like Balzac's Monsieur Grandet's, are always to the point.

Bargaining in Russia, as I have already said, is an institution; there is something quite Oriental in the patience with which each party will try and tire out his adversary. In the bazaars at Constantinople, this warfare is carried on over the *tchibouque* and coffee; and a week will be pleasantly consumed in discussing the price of a carpet. In Russia, in lieu of the coffee and *tchibouque*, it is over the papiros and tea that they fight, whilst the same Fabian tactics are pursued. It is in this way, and in these places, and not in the open market, that bargains are struck and business is done; so that you may spend a week in the fair itself, and fancy there is nothing sold. There is no lack of business done at Nijni: it is difficult to estimate the exact amount of this, because the official statistics on the subject are confessedly deceptive, being always considerably below the mark. The Russian merchants, like other merchants, are not given to being particularly communicative on the subject of their profits: two hundred millions of roubles (say £30,000,000) is probably not too high an estimate for the amount of annual business transacted at the Nijni Yarmark.

Do not fancy that the Russian merchant comes here only for business: you would be even very much deceived if you fancy that in Russia business comes first, and pleasure afterwards; it is far truer to say that this order is here reversed. "Time is money" is not a Russian saying: indeed, when a Russian wishes to be particularly facetious on the subject of our countrymen, he will quote this dictum as the *ne plus ultra* of absurdity. The Russian is essentially and pre-eminently a social animal; with him it is not the family instinct, as in Germany and England, which is the strongest; but it is his "mire," his neighbours, his fellows, a larger aggregate which replaces it: sports, only occasionally of a boisterous and rollicking kind, but generally of a mild and lazy character,—card-playing, tea-drinking, cigarette-smoking, general-do-nothingness, this is the ordinary Russian's paradise: if *dolce far niente* is an Italian saying, it is essentially a Russian practice.

There is a story told, which exactly illustrates the spirit in which the Russian regards the comparative claims of business and pleasure: despatches of importance were brought to the Governor of a Province; he was sitting with two friends, of course drinking tea and smoking cigarettes: overjoyed to see the Imperial messenger, he bad him sit down immediately and make a fourth at whist. "But I have important despatches, your Excellence, which I have been ordered to deliver into your hands without delay." "*Niche vô, niche vô,*" (the phrase by the way you hear oftenest in Russia,) "never mind, never mind, that can

wait! sit down and play your rubber like a man first, and we will attend to all that afterwards;" and there they sat, in the true social spirit of their amiable country, till five in the morning, when they arose and—despatched their business.

It could not, then, be otherwise but that the Nijni Yarmark should be regarded as an opportunity on a large scale for the promotion of all kinds of social pleasure. A great change has, however, certainly taken place in late years in this respect. The softening of manners, the general civilizing influences, which have nowhere been more at work than in Russia during the last quarter of a century, and especially, perhaps, the railroads, have had much to do with this change. The Government, too, which might formerly almost be said to encourage, in the persons of its officials, the rowdyism of the fair, has of late years done its best, in a wise and gradual manner, to check and diminish the scandals which formerly existed. The post of Chief of the Police at Nijni is not a sinecure during the two months that the Yarmark lasts. The combination of a good many moral qualities—tact, firmness, courtesy, and a certain natural *bonhommie*, are the qualities requisite for the proper discharge of its duties. In the opinion of every one without exception at Nijni, these qualities are pre-eminently united in the person of Colonel Carger, the present Chief of the Police. Among the many secrets of statecraft possessed by the Russian Government, that important one of rightly and appropriately selecting its agents is perhaps the chief. An over-

slack and indifferent chief of the police would leave things in their originally chaotic condition; a master of police who joined and headed the general licence, as former masters of police were wont to do, would add fuel with vengeance to the fire; an over straight-laced and prig of an official would, by precipitating a conflict between authority and prescriptive liberty, bring matters to a dead lock. It requires a man of the world, and an intelligent one into the bargain, to steer nicely between these shoals.

Eating and drinking, feasting and banqueting, as may be supposed, is one of the forms in which these assembled merchants especially indulge. Every facility is afforded them for this indulgence. There is a Commercial Club, where a very fair dinner can be had, and where every night heavy sums are won and lost at Baccara: speculation at the Yarmark is nowhere more brisk than here. There is also a Commercial Hotel much frequented by the merchants, and where a great deal besides dinner is discussed. The Buffet at the railway station is also much frequented during the fair; there is a large private room here, where, with the *sesamè* of "chipoff," one may have a large dinner party if one pleases. Who or what "chipoff" is, I must reserve for the next chapter; I will only here say, that if you had ever been to the Nijni fair you would not ask the question. "Chipoff" is the spirit of the fair: the doors of this dining-room at the railway station, and many other doors besides, only open at the sound of the word "chipoff." There used formerly to be an Armenian

restaurant, where excellent Turkish dishes—Chihotma, Pillaw, Shislik, Luli-Kobal, and Dolma, with a wine called "Chichir"—a cuisine highly appreciated by "a sweet tooth"—could be obtained; but somehow or other it did not succeed, and now it no longer exists.

But of all the restaurants in vogue, that of Niketa Egoroff is *facile princeps*. Niketa Egoroff, who at other times flourishes at Moscow, is the "Philippe" of Russia. When the Emperor goes down the Volga, he telegraphs to Niketa Egoroff to accompany him in the quality of *chef*. I think his dinners at the fair are quite worthy of his reputation; I have nowhere else dined so well in Russia. Considering, too, their excellence, the prices are by no means extravagant; lower than at the railway station, where the merit is far inferior. If walls had ears and eyes, this famous restaurant could tell curious tales of scenes formerly enacted there. Governors, Governors-General, Chiefs of Police, Presidents of Committees, grave and habitually sober merchants, stuffed with sterlet, and drunk with champagne, dancing cancans within its walls! But all this is a tale that is told. Now respectability and decorum have taken the place of drunkenness and riot, and Niketa Egoroff's is a model of propriety.

The drama is represented by two theatres. The largest, that in which the Russian drama properly so called is played, did not seem to attract large audiences; as far as I could judge, this appreciation of its merits was a just one. But the smaller

"Théatre Bouffe" was a *succès fou.* I do not think the merit of its performances was very great, but to see the audience—the habitually grave and sedate Orientals especially, their countenances lit up with unwonted fire whilst "Mademoiselle Froufrou" danced her pranks and sang her ditties—was a spectacle one cannot easily forget. If the audience was cosmopolitan, so was the company of actors; English, Russian, and French were there in almost equal proportions, the first rather predominating. This surprised me, as the style of the bouffe is by no means English, but pre-eminently French; but these English artistes seemed nevertheless great favourites with the audience. It was, however, "Mademoiselle Froufrou" whom I have mentioned who "brought down the house." A Russian friend, who spoke to her behind the scenes, was asked by her, "Savez vous, Monsieur, pourquoi on vient en Russie? Eh bien, c'est pour geler." It must be confessed it was horribly cold that night. When this young lady appeared on the stage, she was nine times encored by the audience, in what must have been a most *essouflant* dance, mimetic of the character whose name she had usurped. I do not think she could now complain of cold! A tenth time she was encored! but Mademoiselle Froufrou now turned rusty (or perhaps she was dead) and declined to re-appear. The stage-bell rang, and another *danseuse* made her appearance,—but not a bit of it! the audience was drunk with Froufrou, and in their polyglottish accents loudly and more loudly shouted "Froufrou!" At last, after a quarter of an

hour's uproar, the manager had positively to drag Froufrou, dead or alive, on the stage, in order to quell the tumult. One thing was very obvious about the audience: the more *grivoise* a song or *décolletée* a dance, the more delighted they were. I do not think, judging from the nature of the performances, that this fact escaped the observation of the German manager. In Russia, the censorship redresses in the matter of the drama the balance of its over-strictness in other respects. At Nijni fair perhaps all things are proper, but I have seen exactly the same pieces performed by the same company at the little Bouffe Theatre in the Petrofski Park at Moscow.

Attracted by an electric light burning brilliantly over a building on the north side of the Yarmark, not far from Niketa Egoroff's, I entered a large casino, called Kousnetzoff's; here the entertainment was various: in the first room, an orchestra on a raised platform was playing quadrilles, whilst ugly-looking girls (these, too, importations from Moscow), in Swedish and Russian costumes danced what I suppose they intended for the "cancan." It is a pity people attempt that for which they have no natural genius; the "cancan" has a genius if not a merit of its own; I very much doubt whether any nation but the French can dance it. National dances are like national songs, indigenous to a people. Let any one but a Pole attempt to dance the mazurka; let any one but a Scot attempt to dance the Highland fling; but these last dances are pretty in themselves, and even bad imitations of them, although ludicrous, are not revolting.

But a "cancan" badly danced!—Let us turn away from it, and see what they are doing in the next room, where people are sitting at little tables, of course drinking tea; here, as soon as the orchestra has done its quadrille, a performance commences, for which I do not think we have any name in English, unless it be tomfoolery.

A company of singers form themselves into two lines, with their leader—supposed to represent the famous pirate Stenka Razin—in the middle; he addresses his crew—in prose—in what is supposed to be a soul-stirring harangue, telling them there is a sail in the offing, and they must be prepared to conquer or to die. This speech is a great deal too long; the real historical speeches on such occasions (Cambronne's to wit) have been very short, in fact, monosyllabic. After the speech is over, the crew squat down and begin to row hard, to catch up the merchant sail, singing, whilst they row, a boatman's song, by no manner of means so pretty (Russian songs are essentially monotonous and doleful) as the charming Neapolitan *barcaroli*. When all this nonsense is finished, the youngest of the crew gets up and dances what is called a Cossack's dance: this is really pretty and national: it is of the same character of dance as a sailor's hornpipe, with the same heel-and-toe and double-shuffle steps, but the contortions of the body are even more gymnastical. I have seen soldiers in Russia when marching home from their drilling ground, and when the command has been given "singers to the front" ("*pevtshiki vperod*"), dance this dance, to the

tune of a Dutch chorus, sitting on their heels and jumping up again without interrupting the rhythm of their march.

After Stenka Razin and the Cossack have done, it is the turn of the gipsies. These gipsies, too, (like, in fact, most of the amusements of the fair,) come from Petrofski at Moscow: they bear the same relation to real gipsies that a tame eagle bred in the Zoological Gardens does to one that has his eyrie on the Alps. I do not think one can help rather loving a real gipsy. These swarthy devotees of pilfering idleness have their virtues (indeed some rare ones) and their function; in an age like this, they are a kind of useful living protest against the excess of luxury and civilization: but this tamed, civilized, mercantile gipsy, in a long queue, which perhaps came from Mr. Woerth's, how horrible it is! *Corruptio optimi pessima est.* A gipsy in a long queue! reminding one of nothing so much as a negro with a cocked-hat and spurs. The tented gipsies, on their heath or steppe, are real kings and queens to these hybrid monsters; and I think they know it; the tame gipsy, on the contrary, has a kind of anxious, unsteady look about the eye, as if aware of the ludicrousness of the figure it makes. I remember not long ago coming across a gipsy encampment on the steppes in Russia: the men were sitting down playing at cards (a pastime they alternate with that of horse-stealing; mind, I do not warrant the honesty of the ideal gipsy!) some of the men looked so like Persians that, out of ethnological curiosity, I asked them what they were. "We are the lords of

the fields," ("*Mi dworane Polewii,*") they answered,—a reply worthy of that of the Devil's Dick of Hellgarth in the "Fair Maid of Perth," "we fly our hawks where we find our game, and ask no man whose ground we ride over."

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FAIR. CHIPOFF.

THE government of the Nijni fair is a double government, carried on by a Committee elected by the merchants, exercising a concurrent jurisdiction with the Governor of the Province and the ordinary governmental authorities. The fact of the shops or store-houses of what I have called the "Inner Bazaar" being Government property, gives the Government a special right to interfere in the management of the Yarmark, over and above the general right claimed by all governments to govern. This divided jurisdiction leads to occasional conflicts of authority between these two powers, and there is a growing desire on the part of the locally elected authorities to free themselves from governmental interference. Self-government, or local government, is thoroughly well understood in Russia; there is probably more of it there than anywhere else in Europe, except in England. The vast extent of its territories is no doubt the cause of this. The country is too large to have the local affairs of roads, schools, and public institutions regulated by a central government, however powerful and intelligent. A great deal of self-government has therefore been inevitably conceded to the governments (provinces), districts, and communes. The "mire" itself is a local

government institution. But the last and most important concession in this respect has been the Goubernskaia Zemstvâ, the General Provincial Assemblies, elected for three years by the nobles, peasants, and burgesses, in certain fixed proportions—a concession not only of great importance in itself, but still more so on account of the further changes which it will in course of time inevitably entail. The Central Government is always a little jealous of these local assemblies, lest they should transgress the limits of their jurisdictions, and encroach on that of the Government. It, therefore, through the Governor of the Province, (the Russian equivalent for the French *Préfet*,) keeps a pretty sharp eye on these assemblies; but as long as they confine themselves to their own local affairs, full liberty of action is conceded to them.

The local government of the Yarmark is composed as follows:—The General Assembly of all the merchants, (that which I am hurrying to attend,) is the ultimate repository of power, and the source from which all the local powers, exercised by the different committees of the fair, emanate. Whatever is resolved upon by these committees is referred to this larger assembly at its general meetings, which are held about four times during a Yarmark, for ratification or rejection.

There are two principal committees:—

(1.) The Committee of the Bourse, consisting of six members, who elect their chairman, and whose function it is to collect all statistics connected with the fair, to endeavour to reconcile all differences that

may arise between different merchants,—to act, in fact, as *prud'hommes*,—having no coercive jurisdiction. Formerly they were armed with this, and could put an embargo on a fraudulent merchant's goods, even beyond the limits of the government of Nijni-Novgorod; but these judicial and police powers have latterly been taken from them, and transferred to the ordinary tribunals of the country. As these tribunals are situated in the town of Nijni, at some distance from the fair, on the other side of the river, considerable inconvenience is experienced by these busy merchants, in having to have recourse to them instead of to the summary jurisdiction of their own committee situated in their midst; and some discontent has been occasioned by the change. This committee is elected annually.

(2.) The General Committee of the Fair, consisting of nine members, of which the six members of the Committee of the Bourse form part, and the chairman of which is *ex officio* chairman of this general committee. All the affairs connected with the Yarmark, except those above-mentioned as belonging to the Committee of the Bourse, appertain to this committee, which therefore occasionally comes into collision with the ordinary government, whose jurisdiction is co-extensive with its own.

The best way I can give my readers a correct idea of the kind of business transacted at a general assembly of the merchants, is by giving a list of the questions discussed at the meeting at which I was present.

(1.) It was proposed to purchase (at twenty-five

years' purchase of their rents) the "Inner Bazaar" from the Government, each tenant being allowed to spread his payment over ten years.

(2.) To levy a rate for the establishment of a hospital at the fair.

(3.) To alter the amount of the water-rate.

(4.) To reduce the expenditure for the mounted Cossacks.

(5.) Concerning the right of the Committee to arrest swindlers—to ask for powers.

(6.) To propose a rate of half per cent. for the expenses of the Committee.

(7.) Concerning tobacco-smoking in the Yarmark—to propose more stringent regulations against this practice.

Among these questions, those which might occasion a collision with the Central Government are apparent; for instance, the Committee might propose, and the Assembly desire to confer powers on them, to arrest swindlers; but if the Government chose to maintain the exclusive jurisdiction of their own courts of law, a conflict would arise, in which of course the Government would get the upper hand. Then, again, about the expense of the mounted police: the Government might have an idea that a certain force was requisite or desirable,—and the merchants, who had to pay for the force, object to its amount.—Talking of these Cossacks, they are a very picturesque addition to the Yarmark. They have a very business-like appearance, and their *nagaiki*, thong whips, which all the irregular cavalry in Russia carry, are quite in keep-

ing with their general get-up. They come from the Don: formerly a regiment of Oural Cossacks did duty at the Yarmark, but these shepherd-dogs turned wolves, and pillaged and plundered the merchants they were appointed to protect. They took into their heads that a fat Armenian merchant was fair game anywhere!

When I entered the assembly-room, business had just begun; there were from eighty to a hundred merchants present, sitting in the hall, and facing a table with a green cloth, behind which were placed nine arm-chairs for the nine members of the committee, the chairman of which presided, *ex officio*, over the General Assembly.

I must pause here for a moment. Who do you think that spare, upright, grey-headed little old man, in evening dress with brass buttons, is, who presides over this assembly, and is consequently chairman of all the committees of the fair? The exact image of Monsieur Thiers, he is evidently his counterpart in the influence he wields in the assembly to which he belongs. Every word that falls from him is attentively listened to, and universal deference is paid to him. It is no other than—Chipoff, the greatest, incomparably the greatest man at Nijni: he is seventy years old, and for thirty years has been practically Dictator of the Yarmark. Woe to the Thersites who opposes this Ulysses! With a few incisive words, and with a withering look, Chipoff will annihilate him.

To an Englishman, accustomed to the decorum and order of debate, nothing can appear more disorderly

than the conduct of a debate in this assembly. As soon as Chipoff has done speaking—everybody listens to him with attention—all the members rise and form into two or three groups like body-guards, round two or three different speakers who are all addressing the President at the same time. Somebody in the body of the hall, rather back, sensibly suggests that if everybody would only sit down and talk one at a time, he for one, and others, would be able to see and hear what was going on in front—and Chipoff orders them to be seated. They are seated, but in two minutes afterwards they are all on their legs again, talking away in chorus after their old fashion. Chipoff by this time has shifted his own place, and is standing with his back to the little green table, and therefore nearer the Assembly. He is going to read to them a report which he has himself drawn up relative to the purchase of their shops from Government. There is immediately silence and attention; Chipoff reads the report with emphasis, holding it in his left hand, and with a tall candlestick in his right. When he has done, a member of the assembly on his left ventures to criticise the report. Rash and foolish young man! Chipoff is at him like a shot, physically at him, for walking some steps forward right up to his man, with his report under his left arm, he puts the candle he is holding right under the poor man's nose, and with an unmistakeable "Who the devil are you, Sir," air about him, unnerves his adversary, who shortly collapses. A second rash critic, standing on the right, creates a diversion in favour of the first, by making an

observation. Chipoff is not to be out-manœuvred; by a rapid flank march he faces his new opponent, and with the same air and the same candlestick effectually extinguishes him. No one else apparently desiring particularly to have his eyebrows burnt, there is a pause. Chipoff pronounces a few oracular words, and a general chorus of "*Kharosho! Kharosho!*" proves that Chipoff has carried his point. Chipoff always carries his point: he really possesses the confidence of these assembled merchants, not by burning their eyebrows or singeing their whiskers, but by his general intelligence and integrity, and from a conviction that he knows their real interests better than they do themselves, and will stoutly fight for them. Chipoff is more than a great man at the fair: I have called him "the spirit of the Yarmark:" he is even more than that: he can with truth paraphrase the words of the Great Monarch and say: "*La foire—c'est moi, Chipoff.*"

CHAPTER XIII.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE FAIR.

HAVING passed in review the principal articles of Russian produce brought for sale to the Nijni-Yarmark, I will conclude my review by a few general considerations suggested by this examination, and consider the question, so often mooted, whether the days of the Nijni Fair are numbered. Fairs are a convenient mode of supplying the material wants of a community in the infancy of commerce. The Kirghes and the Kalmucks, living in the steppes of Russia, and dependent for their livelihood upon their single industry—that of rearing herds of horses and of cattle—look entirely to certain periodical fairs for the sale of the bulk of their produce, and the purchase of the necessaries of life. For precisely the same reason, when a whole village or district is engaged in a single industry, be it linen-making, boot-booking, box-making, or any other, with no large town or commercial depôt in its neighbourhood, it will, like the Kirghes and Kalmucks, be entirely dependent on periodical fairs. Now this is exactly what obtains still to a considerable extent in Russia at the present day, and was, to a still greater extent, the case in former times: the associative village system (where a whole village is engaged in one single industry)

is as peculiarly a Russian institution as is that of the agricultural "mire." It takes the place occupied by the guilds of Germany, which have never been known in Russia; the consequence has been, that Russia has always been a congenial soil for fairs, which have flourished here from time immemorial.

In the government of Kharkof alone there were once 288 fairs: there is, in the first place, the little village fair, held perhaps once a-week or more, which supplies the perishable articles of daily want; then in the circle or district there is a monthly fair, which supplies the same necessaries on a larger scale, and where there may be a demand also for the produce of the village; then there is a more important fair, held say twice a-year, in the spring and autumn, in the capital town of the government (province), where there is a still greater demand for the produce of the industry of the villages, and where exchanges are effected in a variety of wares; over and above these, and perhaps outside the limits of the government altogether, there is some large Yarmark which has more than a local reputation, and which attracts to itself not only merchants from the surrounding governments, but also from the more distant parts of the Empire. Thus, in the country of the Ukraine there are eleven well-known fairs, where a considerable trade in fleeces is carried on; but out of these eleven there are two, that of Tliinski in Poltava, and Uspenski in Kharkof, which attract to themselves, on account of the reputation of their Ukraine fleeces, the principal cloth-manufacturers from all parts of

Russia. And so, in widening circles, from the village to the district, from the district to the government, from the government to the small aggregate of governments, we naturally come to some single great national fair, which is fed by all these minor centres, and is frequented by the merchants and producers from every part of the Empire. Now this is exactly the position which the Nijni Yarmark has long occupied in Russia, the one great central spot in this extended Empire, where the products of every kind of industry practised within its limits are brought, and where the corn from the south meets the wood from the north, where the cloth-manufacturer from Moscow or Riga finds the soft fleeces from the Ukraine, and the gun-manufacturer from Toula the iron from the Oural.

It soon began to accumulate the functions which such a general meeting-place naturally suggested: it became the great bourse of Russia: no nation, except in the infancy of commerce, can dispense with such an institution. London is the exchange of the world, but Paris too is an important centre; Frankfort another; Vienna another. What Paris, Frankfort, and Vienna are to their respective countries, Nijni-Novgorod was to Russia: it was more: Paris, Frankfort, and Vienna are only bourses; Nijni was a bourse and a depôt; it was the focus to which the produce of this vast empire was attracted before it was dispersed again to its different markets. As a bourse it was, before railways and telegraphs in a way annihilated distances, the most convenient central spot in Russia; as a depôt, it was for the same reason, equally

convenient: the electric wires now telegraph prices to the most distant parts of the country, and prices can be known and orders given, with all the accuracy and knowledge required for the transaction of the most complicated commercial business, without leaving the factory, or quitting the province; its value as a bourse has consequently diminished; as a depôt, the railways have affected it still more.

We have seen how the cotton manufacturer, instead of risking the uncertain hazard of demand, waits till the fair commences, receives through his agent the actual orders which are then given, and then sets his looms to work for delivery of the goods—perhaps at places quite out of the radius of Nijni-Novgorod; we have seen how the corn which formerly all came to Nijni for a market, now goes either from Saratof by rail direct to Moscow, through Tambof, or from Samara to Rybinsk, all the way by the Volga, and thence by rail to Bologoy, and so on to St. Petersburg and the Baltic. The merchants from Koursk, too, no longer send their hemp, and corn, and iron to Nijni, now that the railways carry their products direct to Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Riga: speaking pretty accurately, one may say that the radius of the attraction of Nijni as a depôt for goods ends at Kalouga.

If you drew a line north and south right down the centre of this government, you would find that the eastern half was attracted to Nijni, and that the western half, with its two feeders of the Oka—viz. the river Jisdra, with its corn, and the river Sukhinigi, with its hemp, was attracted rather to Riga and the

Baltic. St. Petersburg, Moscow, Rybinsk, Riga, Odessa, and Rostof, have gradually grown in independence, and are shaking off their allegiance to Nijni-Novgorod, whilst the railways which now intersect the empire have made each of these places natural centres themselves for the attraction of the produce within the limits of their own spheres. In the same way new places are growing up, threatening still further the monopoly of Nijni-Novgorod. Yaroslaf, for instance, beckons to it the iron from the Oural, on its way to Moscow, with the bribe of lesser railway freights. Now this diminished importance of what was once the only great centre in the empire is exactly what we should be led to expect, *à priori*, by the advance of civilization and of mercantile and commercial progress.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has taught us how differentiation of functions and complication of organisms is in commerce, as in physiology, the test of superior organization. What suited the primitive system of Russian commerce, and what still suits the nomad Kirghis and Kalmuck, is very ill-adapted to the railway-intersected Russia of to-day. Her tariff may protect her merchants from the competition of the foreigner, but it will be impotent to protect them from competition among themselves. The merchant who pays railway freights for a thousand versts for the pleasure of bringing his wares a roundabout way to meet the demand for them, will be undersold by the more intelligent manufacturer who takes the directest and cheapest route to the market for his goods. The laws of political economy are inexorable, and perhaps slowly but

surely stamp with their own trade-mark those natural centres where the cheapest markets are to be found; hence other centres have gradually grown up, which have dethroned the monopoly of Nijni-Novgorod. It could not be otherwise: as well might you expect the merchants of London, Paris, and Vienna to go to Frankfort to purchase and to fetch their wares thence, as for the merchants of St. Petersburg, Riga, Odessa, and Rostof, to continue to go to Nijni-Novgorod on a similar errand. This primitive mode of effecting exchanges is gone—and gone for ever. Will, then, the Nijni Yarmark disappear, or at any rate lose its great importance as a centre for Russian trade? Comparatively speaking, yes: speaking absolutely, I think not. It will change its character, its cosmopolitan character; but its local importance, its importance as one great natural centre out of many, will probably largely increase. The advantage of its admirable central position, on a great river fed by important confluents, it can never lose. It was this which gave it its monopoly; it is this which will preserve its importance.

As a great depôt for the iron of the Ourals (that part of it at any rate which is destined for other centres but those of Moscow and St. Petersburg, which may very likely prefer Yaroslaf), and for the whole of the northern Siberian trade, its importance is assured. And think of the extension which this Siberian trade alone may take, when the natural resources of this country are developed, and its rich and fertile southern plains are populated. Not that Nijni-Novgorod will

monopolise even this trade. The same thing that has occurred in European Russia will probably occur here too in course of time—new centres will arise. Already we see the embryos of these—little fairs, where a few hunters brought their furs to sell to middlemen, who took them to another larger but still insignificant little Yarmark to sell to other larger middlemen, who in their turn took them to a third and yet larger fair, where they met the more important merchant, who bought them to take to the great Nijni Yarmark. Thus we see a fair, not altogether insignificant now, at Tiumen in Tobolsk, on the boundaries of Perm; another at Irbit, in Perm; a third at Semipalatinsk on the Irtish, and quite a large Yarmark at Orenburg; and far away, we have the fairs of Chuguchak and Kuldja, on the borders of China. The large Moscow fur-merchant, his wits sharpened by competition, objects to paying the accumulated profits of this army of middlemen who are between him and the aboriginal hunter, the first link in this chain of purchase and sale; and instead of going to Nijni to buy his furs, he will send his agents straight to Yeniseisk or Yakoutsk, on the Lena. Once the large merchants' agents penetrate into these little fairs, they directly assume an importance they never had before, and grow according: better and more costly wares are brought to them: other Moscow merchants have learnt the secret of buying in the cheapest markets, and send their agents: the fair gets a reputation, and becomes the recognised centre, say, for the fur trade, just as the fair of Tliinski be-

came the recognised centre for the purchase of the best Ukraine fleeces. Nevertheless, as long as Nijni remains a great centre, and higher prices can be obtained there than at these local fairs, the best of the Siberian wares will continue to arrive there, and it will long remain the European depôt for these goods.

The future of Nijni-Novgorod will probably be this: as a fair it will diminish in importance; but as a depôt for those goods of which it is the natural centre, it will increase in importance, and, from a temporary depôt, will probably become more and more a permanent depôt. An important step in this last direction, it seems to me, is being taken at the present moment: it is proposed that the merchants should be allowed to buy their warehouses from the Government, at twenty-five years' purchase on the annual rent they pay for the use of them during the time of the fair; when this is effected, it is extremely probable that they will become permanent depôts, instead of only temporary depôts during the continuance of the fair. It is often answered, to those who ask whether the fair is not diminishing in importance, that, so far from this being the case, its increasing importance is proved by the fact that its duration has latterly been extended from six weeks to two months. It seems to me, that this fact bears another interpretation, viz., what I have now suggested, that the Nijni Yarmark is changing its character, from a fair properly speaking, to a permanent commercial centre. The buildings, too, are assuming greater solidity: not only is the "Inner Bazaar" built of brick, but in the outer faubourgs

this is also the case: a large cathedral is rearing its head among hospitals and other public buildings all of a more or less substantial kind, and the ground—the low swampy ground—covered by the Yarmark, from being only the scene of an ephemeral summer activity, is more and more assuming the appearance of the site of a great city.

"When this change has been effected, then the vice of its original selection will be thoroughly felt, and the lower Nijni-Novgorod will rival St. Petersburg as a city annually rescued, by the activity of man, from the devouring waters. But this will not stop the growth of Nijni-Novgorod. Like the Dutch, these people are accustomed to do battle with nature for their habitations, and the spirit of Peter the Great still lives among the Russians. It will also long remain the great Bourse of Russia: merchants attract merchants, and some great settling-house is required by a commercial people; even when merchants have nothing to sell at Nijni, and have nothing to buy there either, they still resort to the Yarmark for the settlement of accounts. I have mentioned that Koursk has very little now to do in the way of business (i.e., the purchase and sale of goods) with Nijni; nevertheless, its merchants resort there in considerable numbers. And why? Because, although Koursk has very little to do with Nijni directly, yet indirectly it has a great deal; for it has much to do with Moscow, and Moscow has still (though less and less) much to do with Nijni. The Koursk merchants, therefore, resort to the Nijni Yarmark for the settlement of their accounts with

Moscow; and not only with Moscow, but with merchants from every other part of the Empire; for instance, it has an immense business in fine Ukraine wool at the fair of Tliinski: this fair ends just before the Nijni fair commences: and the settlements of the Tliinski fair are made at the Nijni Yarmark. This is the common practice at most of the other large fairs: it is presumed by custom that everybody will be at Nijni, because everybody in old times was there; and this presumption lasts after the fact on which it is founded has ceased to exist.

No doubt, when Moscow becomes the capital of the Empire (with St. Petersburg for its northern port, and Constantinople for its southern *débouché*), the National Bourse and settling-house will be transferred to its national capital; but till then, Nijni-Novgorod will continue to exercise a function, for which its central position and historical importance (commercially speaking) eminently fit it. In estimating the chances, too, of particular places becoming the national emporium for commerce, the kind of trade which principally occupies the nation must not be lost sight of. Is it a foreign trade, or is it a domestic trade? In the case of England, the enormous extension which its foreign trade has taken, makes London the natural emporium for its trade: but in the case of Russia, its foreign trade is absolutely insignificant in comparison with its inland trade. A geographically central spot is therefore a necessity for its trade, and Nijni answers better to this description than any other place.

I wish to lay as much stress as I can on this important difference between our trade, and indeed the trade of the rest of Europe, and that of Russia. It cannot be too often repeated that Russia is not a nation, but a continent: not only by the extent of its giant tracts of land, and in the increasing numbers of its vast population, but in the variety of its products too, it is a self-sufficing continent. Shut up the ports and issues of a country like Belgium, and you ruin it; shut up (if you can) the ports of a country like England, and you ruin it; shut up the ports and issues of a country like Russia, and she scarcely feels the injury: you did so, to a great extent, during the Crimean war, and the consequence was that you gave an extension to her national industries for which her manufacturers are still deeply grateful.

Do not let us fancy that in the perhaps inevitable struggle for the Empire of the East between England and Russia, that we can seriously affect her by the resistless might of our maritime power. Coiled up behind her granite fortresses, in her ice-bound sea, she is practically invulnerable: sacrificing with a light heart her insignificant mercantile marine, she will proceed in her designs uninfluenced by our naval demonstrations. Unless, indeed, England is wise enough to annul the Declaration of Paris, Russia's foreign commerce will, under the neutral flag, be absolutely safe from capture. The pressure which England's naval supremacy has hitherto exercised, by way of counterpoise to Russia's military strength, will be taken away, and the balance of power in Europe

will be consequently upset, to the disparagement of British and the advantage of Russian interests. Fortunately, it is still time to retrace the fatal step taken in 1856, and to annul a Declaration which has never been sanctioned by the Parliament, nor ratified by the Sovereign of this country. Let us look the matter straight in the face: let us reckon with our host. England has resources, unbounded resources, for making herself as formidable on land as she is resistless at sea: but these resources, these hitherto unused military resources, all depend in the ultimate resort on the number of English, Scotch, and Irish men she is able to bring at a pinch into the field—I say is able, because if the men were there, and we could fall back upon them in need, it would probably be unnecessary to call them out: but the last line of our defence must always be English muscles and English hearts. Until the nation insists (for its statesmen of to-day will never have the courage to propose) that all its youth shall pass through the tuition of arms (say for nine continuous months of their lives—no exorbitant sacrifice methinks!), our Empire, the grandest the world has ever seen, the heritage of the pluck and sacrifices of our forefathers, is as a pyramid placed on its apex, which may any day crumble in the dust.

To return to Nijni: concurrently with the changes it is undergoing in a commercial point of view, a great change has been effecting itself, as I have already hinted, in the social conditions which obtained there. If the "Derby" may with justice be called our English Olympic games, the Nijni Yarmark was

undoubtedly the "Saturnalia" of Russia. The Russian merchant made his annual pilgrimage to Nijni, not only to sell his wares, but to shake off the rust of ten months' routine occupations: his idea of shaking off the rust was to clothe himself in every rag of licence. He would save his money, and live parsimoniously all the rest of the year round, in order to be able to lash about his roubles at the Yarmark. The conduct of these middle-aged devotees of commerce and frolic resembled nothing so much as that of a pack of emancipated schoolboys or rollicking undergraduates. They would assemble in a room at one of the restaurants, and, putting the door ajar, swear by all the saints in the Greek Calendar (a portentously accumulative oath) that they would not leave the room until they had battered the door, by a bombardment of champagne corks, sufficiently open to allow them to pass: the batteries would be opened, the champagne all the while flying down the throats of these braves, until they were too drunk to distinguish between closed and open doors, or to get through any doors.

The authorities, too, who always treated this fair as an exceptional phenomenon, to be dealt with on exceptional principles, were far from discouraging these scenes: it is even reported that a former Chief of the Police would take the chair at an uproarious dinner of a hundred persons, and, when it was over, go out with his guests and head the rioters. Kunavin was alive with wine and wassail; night was made hideous with the yelling and shouting of this drunken crew;

justice was paralyzed; the upholders of order were made the ministers of riot, and licence stalked abroad unchecked and unreproved; and then, when Bedlam was out-Bedlamed and the limits of hell o'erstepped, hush-money was the only penalty. But lo! a change has come over the spirit of this midnight dream; Pandemonium is transfigured; the wings of riot are clipt, and respectability re-enthroned in the palace of industry. 'Tis the railroads that have done it: formerly all the world came to the fair; now-a-days all the world—and his wife. It's wonderful what a change this small addition has effected. Mercator Paterfamilias is not the man he was when his sweet partner slept unconscious a thousand versts away; and he will tell you, if you ask him, with a knowing glance and doleful shake of head, "The Yarmark is no longer what it was in the good days of old."

Printed by James Parker and Co., Crown Yard, Oxford.

00084518

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018